



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR LIBRARIES

Sample Application LG-260766-OLS-26
Project Category: National Implementation

Biblioteca Municipal e Infantil Mariana Suárez de Longo

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$299,999
Amount of cost share:	\$0

The Biblioteca Municipal e Infantil Mariana Suárez de Longo in Puerto Rico will establish a mobile library to deliver books, technology, and educational programs to underserved communities in Ponce, Puerto Rico. The mobile unit will provide digital literacy training, tutoring for students, sensory learning activities for children with disabilities, and community workshops for residents of all ages. The project will support the acquisition and customization of a mobile library vehicle, technology equipment and connectivity infrastructure, portable educational materials, outreach supplies, evaluation activities, and dissemination of project results. The project will produce a Mobile Library Implementation Toolkit and operational framework documenting inclusive outreach strategies and service design practices. The programming will focus on sensory literacy and inclusive learning activities for students with disabilities; digital literacy workshops for older adults; tutoring and reading programs for youth; community educational outreach events and technology demonstrations.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

Narrative

Project Title: BiblioPonce sin Paredes – Conectando Comunidades (Mobile Community Library Model for Inclusive Access)

Applicant: Municipio Autónomo de Ponce – Biblioteca Municipal e Infantil Mariana Suárez de Longo (Municipality of Ponce-Mariana Suárez de Longo Public Library)

Introduction

The Municipio Autónomo de Ponce – Biblioteca Municipal e Infantil Mariana Suárez de Longo requests \$299,999 in funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to implement BiblioPonce sin Paredes – Conectando Comunidades (Mobile Community Library Model for Inclusive Access), a 24-month initiative designed to expand equitable access to library services, digital literacy training, and community-centered educational programming across underserved communities in Ponce, Puerto Rico.

The Municipality of Ponce will provide significant in-kind cost share through staff time and operational support, including municipal librarians, educators, program facilitators, administrative oversight, and a municipal driver responsible for operating the mobile unit and supporting outreach activities.

Although the municipality operates the Biblioteca Municipal e Infantil Mariana Suárez de Longo and three community libraries, many residents—particularly those living in rural sectors, public housing communities, and neighborhoods located far from the urban center—experience barriers to accessing library services due to transportation limitations, geographic distance, and socioeconomic constraints.

To address these challenges, the project will deploy a fully equipped mobile library based on established Mobile Library / Bookmobile services and digital literacy outreach models used by public libraries across the United States, while expanding these models through an inclusive service design that integrates accessible technology, sensory learning tools, and hybrid indoor-outdoor programming environments.

Through this model, the mobile library will function as a deployable community learning hub serving diverse populations, including students with disabilities, youth, older adults, and families living in underserved communities.

Over the course of the project, the initiative will:

- engage 100 students with disabilities in sensory literacy and inclusive learning activities
- provide digital literacy training to 300 older adults
- deliver tutoring and educational enrichment programming to 150 students
- reach at least 1,200 residents through community-based educational events and outreach services

Grant funds will support the acquisition and customization of the mobile library vehicle, technology equipment and connectivity infrastructure, portable educational materials, outreach supplies, evaluation activities, and dissemination of project results. Municipal cost share will provide staffing, operational oversight, and logistical support, ensuring that the mobile library can operate sustainably beyond the grant period.

In addition to expanding access locally, the project will produce a Mobile Library Implementation Toolkit and operational framework documenting inclusive outreach strategies and service design practices that can be replicated by libraries serving geographically dispersed or underserved communities.

Project Justification

The municipality of Ponce, Puerto Rico, faces significant geographic and socioeconomic disparities that affect equitable access to library services, digital resources, and educational opportunities. Ponce is the second largest municipality in Puerto Rico, with a population of approximately 130,000 residents, and nearly half of the population lives below the poverty line, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Economic challenges further affect access to learning resources, as the median household income in Ponce is approximately \$19,877 and per capita income is approximately \$14,625, both substantially lower than the United States national averages.

In addition to economic disparities, geographic distance and transportation limitations create barriers for many residents seeking access to educational and cultural resources. Ponce includes more than 5,000 public housing units, many located in communities with limited proximity to public services, cultural institutions, and educational facilities. Residents living in rural barrios and neighborhoods located far from the urban center often face additional challenges reaching library facilities regularly.

These conditions contribute to structural barriers that limit access to technology, digital literacy training, and educational programming. Community engagement conducted by the Municipal Department of Education and the municipal library system—including participation patterns in library programs, outreach requests from community leaders, and observations from educators—has consistently highlighted the need to extend library services beyond traditional facilities in order to reach residents who face these barriers.

The proposed project addresses this challenge by implementing BiblioPonce sin Paredes – Conectando Comunidades, a mobile library initiative designed to bring library services, digital literacy training, and inclusive educational programming directly to communities throughout Ponce.

The project builds upon established Mobile Library / Bookmobile service models used by public libraries throughout the United States, which have long demonstrated effectiveness in expanding access to library services in geographically dispersed communities. This initiative adapts those models by integrating mobile collections with

digital literacy outreach, accessible technology, and inclusive programming designed to serve diverse populations.

The mobile library will incorporate principles of inclusive mobile library services and community-centered digital learning, integrating accessible technology, modular learning kits, wireless connectivity, and flexible indoor-outdoor programming spaces that allow the mobile library to function as a deployable educational hub capable of serving multiple populations simultaneously.

Rather than replacing existing library services, the mobile unit will operate as an outreach extension of the municipal library system, expanding the reach of the Biblioteca Municipal e Infantil Mariana Suárez de Longo and strengthening connections between community residents and the city's library network.

A wide range of community members will benefit from the project. Students with disabilities will participate in sensory literacy and accessible educational activities designed to support inclusive learning experiences. Older adults will receive digital literacy training that supports their ability to access online services and communicate in digital environments. Youth living in underserved neighborhoods will benefit from tutoring, reading programs, and digital learning activities that strengthen academic development and technological skills. Families and residents in rural and public housing communities will gain access to educational programming and digital resources that are currently difficult to reach.

By delivering services directly within communities and integrating inclusive design principles, the project will demonstrate how mobile library models can address digital equity, accessibility, and community-centered learning. The results of this initiative—including program design strategies, operational practices, and outreach methods—will contribute to the development of a replicable model that other libraries can adopt when seeking to expand equitable access to services in underserved communities.

Project Work Plan

The project will be implemented over a **24-month period** and organized into four implementation phases designed to ensure careful planning, effective deployment of services, and continuous evaluation of outcomes.

Phase 1: Project Planning and Procurement (Months 1–8)

During the initial phase, the project team will complete operational planning and initiate the municipal procurement process required for the acquisition of the mobile library vehicle. Municipal purchasing procedures, including solicitation, vendor selection, and contracting, are expected to require several months.

Once the vehicle is acquired, it will undergo customization and preparation to support mobile library operations.

The vehicle will be equipped with modular shelving, accessible technology stations, wireless internet connectivity, digital learning tools, sensory learning kits, and portable educational equipment that will allow the mobile library to function as a hybrid indoor-outdoor learning environment.

Key activities include:

- municipal procurement and acquisition of the mobile library vehicle
- vehicle customization, vehicle graphic wrap, and installation of equipment
- acquisition of digital technology, connectivity infrastructure, and learning materials
- development of operational protocols and community service routes
- preparation of educational programming materials
- staff training in digital literacy instruction, inclusive technology use, and mobile outreach services
- identification of priority service locations across underserved neighborhoods

Phase 2: Pilot Deployment and Community Engagement (Months 9–12)

Once the vehicle is fully prepared and operational, the mobile library will begin pilot outreach operations in selected communities. This phase will allow the project team to test service delivery approaches, refine programming logistics, and gather community feedback before expanding to full operations.

Weekly service routes will include visits to rural communities, public housing developments, and neighborhoods with limited access to library services.

Programming during this phase will include:

- digital literacy workshops for older adults
- sensory literacy activities for students with disabilities
- tutoring and reading activities for youth
- community educational events and technology demonstrations

Community feedback will be collected through participant surveys, attendance records, and consultations with educators and community leaders. The project team will use this information to refine service schedules, adjust programming content, and improve accessibility strategies.

Phase 3: Full Implementation of Mobile Library Services (Months 13–22)

Following the pilot phase, the mobile library will move into full implementation with a structured weekly service schedule designed to maximize community participation and educational impact.

Programming will focus on four primary service areas:

- sensory literacy and inclusive learning activities for students with disabilities
- digital literacy workshops for older adults
- tutoring and reading programs for youth
- community educational outreach events and technology demonstrations

The mobile library will operate as a flexible learning environment in which educational activities can occur both inside the vehicle and in surrounding community spaces using portable learning kits and modular equipment that allow staff to deploy outdoor learning stations.

Phase 4: Evaluation, Documentation, and Dissemination (Months 20–24)

During the final phase, the project team will focus on evaluation, documentation of project outcomes, and dissemination of the project's results to the broader library field.

Key activities include:

- analysis of participation data and program outcomes
- documentation of operational practices and lessons learned
- development of the Mobile Library Implementation Toolkit
- preparation of project reports and digital resources
- dissemination of project findings through professional networks, conferences, and library organizations

This phase will ensure that the knowledge gained through the project contributes to a replicable model that can support other libraries seeking to expand equitable access to services in underserved communities.

Each phase of the work plan is designed to ensure that the project's activities directly support the intended outcomes, including increased access to library services, improved digital literacy skills, expanded participation in educational programming, and the development of a replicable mobile library model.

Project resources, including the mobile library vehicle, digital technology, educational materials, and municipal staff support, are aligned with the scope of the project and are sufficient to support implementation, evaluation, and dissemination activities.

Project Management and Staffing

The project will be managed by the Municipio Autónomo de Ponce – Biblioteca Municipal e Infantil Mariana Suárez de Longo.

The project team includes:

- **Library Director (Project Director)** – oversight, compliance, and reporting
- **Mobile Library Coordinator** – daily operations and route scheduling

- **Municipal library staff and educators** – delivery of programming and instruction
- **Municipal driver** – operation of the mobile unit and logistical support

These staff members bring extensive experience in community outreach, educational programming, and library services.

Stakeholder Engagement

Community needs were identified through ongoing engagement between the municipal library system, educators, and community leaders.

Throughout the project, stakeholder input will be incorporated through:

- participant feedback surveys
- consultations with educators and community representatives
- periodic program reviews to adjust service delivery strategies

Evaluation and Impact Measurement

The project will implement a structured evaluation framework using both quantitative and qualitative data.

Evaluation methods include:

- participant registration and attendance tracking
- pre- and post-digital literacy assessments for training participants
- participant satisfaction surveys
- program observation and staff reporting
- quarterly project review meetings

Key performance indicators include:

- number of students with disabilities participating in inclusive literacy activities
- number of older adults completing digital literacy training
- number of youth participating in tutoring programs
- total community participation in outreach events

In addition to participation metrics, the project will measure learning outcomes through structured evaluation tools. Digital literacy workshops will include brief pre- and post-training assessments measuring participants' confidence and ability to complete common digital tasks such as accessing online services, using email, and navigating digital information platforms. Youth educational programming will incorporate reading and technology engagement indicators tracked through participation logs and instructor observations. These evaluation methods will provide evidence of both service reach and learning impact. Evaluation findings will be used to refine programming and to document the effectiveness of the mobile library model.

Risk Management

Potential implementation risks include vehicle maintenance issues, weather disruptions affecting outdoor programming, and fluctuations in participation levels.

To mitigate these risks, the project will:

- maintain flexible service schedules
- use indoor community locations when necessary
- conduct preventive vehicle maintenance
- maintain partnerships with community organizations to sustain participation

Project Results

The project will produce measurable community outcomes and practical implementation resources that expand equitable access to library services while contributing a replicable model for mobile inclusive library outreach.

Intended Results

The project will achieve the following outcomes:

- **100 students with disabilities** participating in inclusive literacy activities
- **300 older adults** receiving digital literacy training
- **150 students** participating in tutoring and educational enrichment programs
- **1,200 residents** participating in community educational events

These outcomes will expand digital literacy, educational engagement, and access to library services across underserved communities.

Deliverables

Project deliverables will include:

- Mobile Library Implementation Toolkit
- operational guidelines for mobile library outreach
- program design templates for inclusive programming
- documentation of outreach strategies and lessons learned

Adaptability and Replicability

The Mobile Library Implementation Toolkit will include program templates, operational guidelines, outreach planning strategies, and recommendations for integrating accessible technologies into mobile library services.

These materials will enable other libraries to adapt the model to local contexts.

To ensure usability across different contexts, the Mobile Library Implementation Toolkit will be developed through an iterative review process that includes feedback from library professionals and community partners. Draft materials will be tested internally during the project's implementation phase and refined based on operational experience. The toolkit will include bilingual guidance (Spanish and English), adaptable program

templates, route planning strategies, and recommendations for integrating accessible technologies in both urban and rural service environments.

Community participants will also contribute to the development of the Mobile Library Implementation Toolkit. Feedback from older adult participants, students with disabilities, and youth involved in the programming will be gathered through surveys and facilitated discussions during the implementation period. These perspectives will help refine program templates, accessibility practices, and outreach strategies included in the toolkit.

Dissemination

Project results will be shared through:

- professional library conferences
- presentations and workshops
- written reports and digital resources
- online dissemination through library networks

The project team will also share results through professional networks including regional and national library associations, digital literacy initiatives, and professional conferences that focus on community engagement and equitable access to information.

Dissemination materials will include presentations, case studies, and digital resources describing the operational framework and lessons learned during implementation.

National Impact

Beyond its local impact, BiblioPonce sin Paredes – Conectando Comunidades will contribute to national learning and innovation in equitable library service delivery. By documenting operational strategies, inclusive programming approaches, and mobile outreach practices, the project will generate practical knowledge that can inform mobile library services across diverse geographic contexts. The Mobile Library Implementation Toolkit and accompanying documentation will provide adaptable guidance for libraries serving rural areas, island communities, and urban neighborhoods with limited access to traditional library facilities. By demonstrating how mobile library services can integrate digital literacy training, accessible technologies, and community-centered programming, the project will contribute to a growing body of practice focused on expanding equitable access to information and learning opportunities. Through dissemination activities and professional engagement with library networks, the project will support other institutions seeking to implement inclusive mobile library outreach models and strengthen community access to library services nationwide.

Sustainability

The Municipality of Ponce is committed to sustaining the project beyond the grant period.

Following the grant, the mobile library will continue to operate as an outreach extension of the Biblioteca Municipal e Infantil Mariana Suárez de Longo. Municipal library staff and educators will integrate mobile programming into ongoing services, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Following the grant period, operational costs—including vehicle maintenance, staffing, and outreach programming—will be incorporated into the municipal library system’s regular operating budget. Because the project builds upon existing municipal infrastructure and personnel, the Municipality of Ponce is well positioned to sustain the mobile library as a permanent outreach service.

Schedule of Completion

Project: BiblioPonce sin Paredes – Conectando Comunidades

Project Period: 24 Months

Project Year 1 (Months 1–12)

Major Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Project kickoff and administrative setup	■	■										
Municipal procurement of mobile library vehicle	■	■	■	■	■	■						
Vehicle customization, equipment installation, and graphic wrap				■	■	■	■	■				
Technology acquisition and connectivity setup			■	■	■	■	■	■				
Development of programming materials and curriculum			■	■	■	■	■	■				
Staff training and outreach route planning					■	■	■	■				
Pilot deployment of mobile library services									■	■	■	■
Community feedback and program refinement									■	■	■	■

Project Year 2 (Months 13–24)

Major Activity	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Full implementation of mobile library services	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Educational programming and community outreach	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Ongoing monitoring and evaluation	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Development of Mobile Library Implementation Toolkit						■	■	■	■	■		
Toolkit review, validation, and revisions								■	■	■		
Dissemination activities (presentations, publications, networks)									■	■	■	■
Final evaluation and project reporting											■	■