

Proposal Narrative

Project Justification

A large part of the population in Puerto Rico is affected by limited access to spaces for education, training and development of skills for personal and professional improvement, beyond formal academic settings. Particularly, the population of scarce resources. Consequently, this situation restricts access to information, digital technologies and educational resources. In a similar way, the elderly and the homeless lack skills in the use of current digital technologies. These factors substantially curtail the right of many in our society to be informed, to express themselves and to be educated, and deprives them of using current technological tools that allow them to obtain employment, conduct personal matters, develop new skills and obtain the knowledge necessary to change their lives. Our library serves regularly this population (as well as many other groups) and has identified pressing needs which give us the opportunity to expand our services and to strengthen our educational programming. This will allow us to promote information and technological literacy, and improve our current community workshops program. At least once a year, we conduct assessments of our patrons needs through online and onsite surveys. The most recent one was in January 2019. The tendencies regarding the need of internet access, availability of technological devices for public use, as well as training needs are constant. In the event of natural disasters, such as the 2017 Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which affected all communities in Puerto Rico, leaving the Island without emergency access to communication, the library aspires to provide a resilient facility and a safety net for connectivity among community residents in need.

In a broader scope, according to a study by the Pew Research Center (2018) about the adult population of the United States, 88% of respondents had access to the internet and considered it as something positive. The respondents highlighted that digital technologies have had a good impact in their lives. 65% of adults with online access are 65 or older and agreed that the internet has been good for society in general. 62% of these adult participants in the study mentioned that the internet facilitates and speeds up access to information; while 23% of this group indicated that the internet helps them keep in touch with friends and family. Another study conducted in 2017 also by the Pew Research Center showed that older adults (65 and older) indicate that they need assistance using electronic devices. Other results of the study show that although 1 in 5 Americans have a smartphone they do not have access to broadband service in their homes. Another 15% indicated that they do not have any of the two services, while 11% do not have online access of any kind.

In keeping with the needs identified, the library will establish a program of inclusive educational opportunities that will cover digital literacy needs. This training program will provide access to emerging technologies and will promote skills development through face-to-face and hands-on workshops that will be offered to a diverse audience. The workshops will be given in group sessions, but participants will have the opportunity to meet with a volunteer and / or trained librarian to assist them with individualized training.

Furthermore, we conceptualize our library as a community center for all, focused on social change, adapted to the changing needs of users and reinvented to current operational changes. Our library is an environment with the user as the center of its mission, it strengthens the community and seeks to cultivate learning and knowledge by providing access to technology, the internet and professional assistance in information and communication technologies. As a community and specialized library, it is our priority that everyone has a stake in democracy

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and we firmly believe that informed citizens create successful communities and individuals. In order to carry out the training program and to enhance access to technological resources in our library, we require new equipment, such as computers and tablets, and we need to update peripheral equipment, such as: USB drives for storage, headphones to access audiovisual information, wireless mice, and wall connectors and extensions that allow better electrical connection of equipment that so requires it. Allowing users to charge their tablets and cell phones safely and quickly promotes access to information and the use of these technologies in a portable manner, in and out of the library. Additionally, we will integrate data-transfer and/or re-charge for mobile devices and computers, as well as a charging station for mobile devices, thus emulating other academic and community libraries that have redefined their spaces to foster a more productive environment.

As a direct reference, we use two case studies that support our project and resemble our conditions as an organization. The first is the case study of the Austin FREE-NET project (AFN) which created the Building a Digital Inclusion Movement, with the belief that a world without a digital divide is possible. This institution has been working since 1995 providing free computer workshops to adults through individualized instruction where students teach the use and basic management of a computer, focused on the goal established by the participant. In addition, they offer public internet access to disadvantaged communities. For this project, a group of volunteers was recruited and trained in order to pursue participants by visiting community members at their homes, as most in the vicinity were not internet users and did not know of the existence of the educational programs. It has been a successful project on such a scale that they established training programs throughout the city, and they have been tracking very efficiently the progress of its participants and fulfilling its mission to eliminate the digital divide.

The second case study is the Martha O'Bryan Center (MOBC) which developed Building Digital Literacy Programs. MOBC is a nonprofit organization that fights poverty and has strong ties to the community since 1894. This organization serves the most affected public housing community in Nashville, Tennessee. They carry out a digital inclusion program through an open access computer lab since 2015: The Digital Empowerment Laboratory. The lab has received 410 visits by residents of the neighborhood, providing 220 hours of service as digital literacy workshops. Some of the workshops covered topics such as basic use of computers, job applications, resume writing, email use, social networks and word processing. MOBC relies on volunteer work to promote digital literacy.

Ours is a small library located in an urban area in San Juan, Puerto Rico, with a staff of 2 (1 full-time and 1 part-time) and a collection composed of 4,724 titles so far. The space can accommodate up to 25 people, between the reading area and small computer center. However, we regularly serve, at most, 10 to 12 users at a time. We are located on the second floor of the main office building of a non-profit organization we are an integral part of. This organization, the Sila M. Calderon Foundation, focuses on improving economic conditions for Puerto Ricans, and as part of it we have gained access to our surrounding community as well as to a wider audience. Since our opening ten years ago, our users have considered the library a trusted place where they can improve their lives through education and access to information and technological devices. This well-established connection with our patrons will be an advantage when the time comes for the promotion of the workshops we plan to offer and the recruitment of those interested in participating.

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In the digital world we live in, the most affected are those without digital technologies skills and, as a result, have fewer opportunities in life. The workshops we propose to offer will allow everyone to benefit from learning about using various applications and online tools, content creation, computer programs, web browsing, tools for entrepreneurs and small businesses, and government online services. Although we are a library with a specialized collection, our doors are open to the community and we welcome anyone who needs our services. Our library receives a diverse public: professionals, professors, researchers, university students, entrepreneurs, teachers, schoolchildren, surrounding community members and the general public. However, the population in need of digital inclusion and at a disadvantage with regard to other groups are those of our urban-decayed community, those of scarce resources, the elderly and underserved populations such as: homeless, users of controlled substances and people with little or no education who have not had training in technological literacy. The library is committed to and believes in lifelong learning, for this reason, we will continue with our work towards digital inclusion for all disadvantaged people to strengthen their knowledge in current technological tools and new information concepts.

Technological literacy is key to personal and professional development of every citizen. Even more important is to have the community participate in the development of the proposed project, so, in a way, they are also taking ownership of it. To develop a solid project, we have integrated our users in the identification of needs through periodic surveys, which can also make us understand the environment they live in. Also, through the daily service provided in the library for the last ten years, we have been able to identify the diverse digital literacy needs that many users have. Beyond our efforts tracking their needs, our patrons will also get involved in the project by evaluating each workshop and making recommendations, serving as promoters of the educational activities, and increasing general awareness of the services provided by the library.

As part of the goals of the digital inclusion project category, our project focuses on improving the role of our library in increasing access to information, technological resources and networks. The proposed project will promote digital literacy, access to the internet, and the active participation of the community in the educational activities that will be carried out. Moreover, our intended workshop audience and our surrounding community will reconceive our library as a more inviting and productive space with more relevance in their daily lives. In line with APP goals and following the best practices models presented previously in the case studies, our library will establish a program based on digital literacy education. Furthermore, the proposed training program will support the **promotion of life-long learning** IMLS agency-level goal by providing specialized workshops to a diverse audience.

As a vital part of the project, we will strengthen our collaborative partnership with the local community board incorporating them in outreach and promotional efforts related to the educational program. The Municipality of San Juan and other non-profit organizations that have worked with us in the past can also participate in these outreach and promotional efforts. Besides, we are an E-Rate program participating library and we seek continuously to enhance our broadband and wireless capacities. Within the scope and time period of this project, we will work closely with our network providers to adjust our internet service to the needs of the program and of our users.

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Project Work Plan

Through the acquisition of new equipment and software, we will increase and improve the free workshop program that we currently offer. The new technological resources will be used as part of a learning laboratory that will allow users to have practical experience through immersion. According to the needs expressed by visitors and gathered through surveys over the years, the library will provide training on basic computer use, web resources and other practical matters. Library staff, volunteers and external instructors contacted for this project will offer the workshops, that will include specifically the following topics: Infographics, use of Google tools (Drive, Forms, Calendar, Photos), creation of email accounts, effective searches in Google and Google Scholar, use of Microsoft Office programs (Word, Excel, Power Point), use of online and mobile tools and applications, creation of infographics and content in Canva and Piktochart, resume writing and creation of a professional profile in LinkedIn, use of smartphones, social networks for personal and business use (Facebook, Instagram), introduction to e-commerce, creation of simple websites (Wix, Google Sites), computer use (PC and laptops), electronic governmental online platforms, as well as online privacy and security .

The workshops will take place in the Library or one of the meeting rooms in our organization's building. Participants will develop their skills while practicing what they learn using the new equipment. They will also be able to clarify doubts during the session, while the instructors are there. Likewise, participants may make an appointment for supervised and individualized practice in the library with one of our volunteers, and may use the computer lab during library working hours. Giving three workshops per month, with 15 to 20 attendants per workshop, we expect to benefit over 1,080 people during the two years of the project's implementation,

Library staff, namely its manager and the librarian, are in charge of project planning, implementation and general supervision. This staff will work with the Sila M. Calderon Foundation's Finance and Administration office to ensure compliance with IMLS grant administration procedures. The librarian will provide most of the workshops, but we will also recruit volunteers to assist during the workshops and to recruit participants. We have received volunteer collaboration for several years and have established a well organized volunteer program, so we will draw from this experience for the development of the project. As needed, we will also contact professionals from outside the organization to serve as instructors. (Please refer to the attached curriculum-Supporting document #3).

As previously mentioned, collaborative agreements are in place or will be reached with the Municipality of San Juan and other organizations for the promotion of the workshops, recruitment of participants and to contact potential instructors or volunteers to offer or assist in the workshops. Workshops will take place during the project's funding period: from September 2019 to August 2021. We plan to have them on Thursdays, and they will last an average of two hours per session. Depending on each workshop's subject, we will need computers or other devices as well as complementary equipment such as cables or USB drives. This equipment is to be acquired with the funds granted. Another essential component will be internet access in the room or area where the workshop takes place. Meeting rooms with tables and chairs (provided by our institution) or the library's own assets will also be needed. As to personnel, we will require that mentioned in the previous paragraph.

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We expect to run a straightforward training program and to provide reliable access to information and to technological resources; however, we are aware that some risks may appear. If we have fewer participation than expected during the first workshops, we will launch a more aggressive promotional campaign involving professional information services organizations, local library consortia and maybe even inviting people from other municipalities. As to technical difficulties, however unlikely, we may lose internet access on the day of a training session. But our library has always received effective and fast service from our providers, so we expect this issue to be resolved quickly. Also, our institution receives the services of an IT consultant who can work remotely and could assist in case of any unexpected technical difficulty.

Participants will evaluate every workshop through a survey conducted at the end in which they will let us know if it fulfilled the learning objectives. Also, the participants themselves will assess their learning by completing pre and post evaluations of their progress as to new knowledge acquired. A final practical test may also be required, depending on the subject. We will also measure and compare attendance to the current session, previous assistance to workshops on the same topic, demand, and average of participants that complete the entirety of the session without leaving early. As we do today, we will perform routinely surveys among our users regarding the workshops in general as well as the rest of the services provided by our library.

Project Outcomes

The expected general result of this project is to improve library services with regard to access to information and technological resources, and to promote education as to digital technology skills not only to our relevant community of users, but also to a wider audience, particularly underserved groups. To achieve this, we will host 75 workshops over two years using modern equipment acquired with IMLS grant funds. Participant follow up, technical assistance and practice will also be provided as needed during library working hours. Through improved services and workshops on very specific subjects we plan to address our user needs, as expressed by them, and to reduce the digital divide among certain groups in our society, thus fostering life-long learning. Surveys will be essential to collect data on the project's progress and for the achievement of our goals. Particular attention will be given to number of attendants, number of total responses, and completeness of the document (number of responses vs. number of non-responses).

The success of this project lies in the skills and abilities that the participants develop and / or acquire, which will be measured by their own assessments. Eventually, participants will demonstrate technological independence in the use of applications, software and technological equipment. They will break free from the digital divide by implementing what they have learned on their own and will be able to teach others, at least at a very basic level.

For reporting purposes, we will gather the data collected from assessment surveys and from the practical tests. We also propose to follow up on participants through a questionnaire sent every six months in order to assess his or her status with regard to knowledge and use of technology after the workshops. At the same time, participants may visit our library at any moment to practice skills of request assistance. This contact will also provide valuable information regarding the benefits derived from the project. We will report this information utilizing Excel spreadsheets and graphs.

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The equipment obtained for this project will remain freely available to the public once the grant period ends. Periodically, we will continue to offer workshops along the same thematic lines utilizing this equipment. The instructors will come from our own staff, from volunteers and from among professionals that willingly would like to collaborate with us. As we currently do, the library will assist our visitors during working hours and will make sure that they can practice what they learned, have access to information and may use the technological equipment acquired as part of this project.

Month / Year	Day	Workshop	Maximum Capacity	Duration	Location
Sep-19	12	Introduction On How to Use Computers 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	19	Introduction On How to Use Computers 2	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	26	Introduction On How to Use Computers 3	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Oct-19	10	Creation of Gmail Email Account & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	17	Online Government Services and Utilities	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	24	Creation of Gmail Email Account & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Nov-19	31	Online Government Services and Utilities	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	7	Introduction to Facebook Social Media 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	14	Introduction to Facebook Social Media 2 & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Dec-19	21	Better Planning with Google Calendar	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	12	Introduction to Facebook Social Media 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	19	Introduction to Facebook Social Media 2 & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Jan-20	16	Introduction On How to Use Computers 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	23	Introduction On How to Use Computers 2	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	30	Introduction On How to Use Computers 3	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Feb-20	13	Learn How to Create Infographics	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	20	Understanding My "Smartphone": Cell Phone Usage 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	27	Understanding My "Smartphone": Cell Phone Usage 2	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Mar-20	12	Introduction On How to Use Computers 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	19	Introduction On How to Use Computers 2	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	26	Introduction On How to Use Computers 3	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Apr-20	21	Creation of Gmail Email Account & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	22	Basic Resume Building	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	23	Online Government Services and Utilities	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	24	Introduction to Microsoft Word	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
May-20	7	Introduction to Facebook Social Media 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	14	Introduction to Facebook Social Media 2 & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	21	Introduction to Microsoft Power Point	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Jun-20	9	Basic Resume Building	20	3	Meeting Rooms
	11	Creation of Professional LinkedIn Profile	20	3	Meeting Rooms
	16	Social Media for Business: Facebook and Instagram	20	3	Meeting Rooms
	18	Introduction to Ecommerce	20	3	Meeting Rooms
	23	Introduction to Microsoft Excel for Business	20	3	Meeting Rooms
	25	Basic Business Accounting and Spreadsheets	20	3	Meeting Rooms
Jul-20	16	Creation of Gmail Email Account & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	23	Learn How to Create Infographics	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Aug-20	13	Introduction On How to Use Computers 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	20	Introduction On How to Use Computers 2	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	27	Introduction On How to Use Computers 3	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms

Month / Year	Day	Workshop	Maximum Capacity	Duration	Location
Sep-20	10	Basic Resume Building	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	17	Understanding My "Smartphone": Cell Phone Usage 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	24	Understanding My "Smartphone": Cell Phone Usage 3	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Oct-20	15	Introduction to Microsoft Word	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	22	Introduction to Facebook Social Media 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	29	Introduction to Facebook Social Media 2 & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Nov-20	12	Creating Digital Content with Canva	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	17	Introduction to Microsoft Power Point	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	24	Introduction to Google Drive	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Dec-20	10	Memory Cloud with Google Photos	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	17	Introduction to the Facebook App	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Jan-21	21	Creation of Gmail Email Account & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	28	Online Government Services and Utilities	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Feb-21	11	Introduction On How to Use Computers 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	18	Introduction On How to Use Computers 2	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	25	Introduction On How to Use Computers 3	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Mar-21	11	Introduction to Facebook Social Media 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	18	Introduction to Facebook Social Media 2 & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Apr-21	5	Creation of Gmail Email Account & Online Security	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	6	Basic Resume Building	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	7	Online Government Services and Utilities	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	8	Introduction to the Facebook App	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	9	Introduction to Instagram App	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
May-21	13	Introduction On How to Use Computers 1	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	20	Introduction On How to Use Computers 2	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	27	Introduction On How to Use Computers 3	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Jun-21	10	Búsquedas Efectiva en Google	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	17	Learn about Google Forms	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	24	Online Government Services and Utilities	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Jul-21	15	Creating Digital Content with Piktochart	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	22	My First Web Page with Wix	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	29	Effective Google Searches	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
Aug-21	17	Google Scholar Search Engine for Research	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	19	Creation of Professional LinkedIn Profile	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	24	Creation of Professional LinkedIn Profile	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms
	26	Introduction to Google Drive	20	2.5	Meeting Rooms