The vision of Athens Regional Library System and the Athens-Clarke County Library is to Engage Communities and Exceed Expectations in all programs and services. The mission of the Athens-Clarke County Libraries, established by the Athens-Clarke County Library Board of Trustees, and reaffirmed October 5, 2012, is to provide information and resources which address the needs of the community, foster enjoyment and a love of reading, and provide a repository of the history and culture of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. We have created and revealed a new statement of the Library's core values, affirming that the Library provides an atmosphere and work environment that embodies each value.

- INCLUSIVE – Promotes Library services for our diverse populations. Our goal is to have a positive and lasting effect on every individual who interacts with the Library.
- Supportive of our COMMUNITY - Supports the success of our community and strengthens the connections we share. We engage our community by being responsive and by making a difference.
- RESPECTFUL – Treats every person fairly and impartially, providing equitable access to everyone. We believe in validating all voices and treating everyone equitably.
- Committed to EXCELLENCE – Strives toward the highest standards of performance, quality, and service. We act with integrity, honesty, and confidentiality to exceed expectations.
- WELCOMING – Seeks to connect with patrons and each other in positive ways and to help people make the best use of the Library. We understand that our connection with people is unique and vital.

The expanded and renovated Athens-Clarke County Library celebrated its rededication and 100th anniversary in April 2013. The Library in Athens, Georgia includes areas dedicated for children, teens, technology, local history and genealogy, and of course, books. The Library also houses an outreach office for Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services (GLASS) which promotes use of assistive technology and provides accessible reading materials. It is the main public library in Athens-Clarke County, a small consolidated city/county of 126,797 people. Athens is also home to Georgia's flagship educational institution, the University of Georgia. The Library is a center of the community and a hub for many events and activities, with annual visits to the building totaling 332,758 in FY17.

According to the 2017 Envision Athens Strategic Planning project completed by Athens-Clarke County Unified Government, the population of Athens-Clarke County increased 22.3% from 2000 – 2015. The overall share of racial minority population increased for each measured group, resulting in nearly 31% of the population identifying as other than white. Residents of Hispanic/Latinx ethnicity in the county nearly doubled during that time period and now represent 10.6% of the county's population. One revealing indicator of needs in Athens is the county's 36.7% poverty rate, the fourth highest of all of Georgia's 159 counties.

The Library provides free access to an upgraded Digital Media Center, more than 100 public computers, free wireless Internet access, and free classes and tutoring in basic to advanced computer skills. The Library also provides robust programming for all ages, ranging from infant story times to teen craft programs to job searching and entrepreneurial classes and events.

Today's vibrant Athens-Clarke County Library began in January 1913, when the Athens Library Association was chartered in Athens, Georgia. Athens Regional Library was formed in 1940, with the Athens Library serving as the Regional headquarters. Today the Regional System operates 11 branch libraries in five counties. From this foundation, the Library has grown to become a vital component in the enviable quality of life enjoyed in Athens-Clarke County, and was named Georgia Public Library of the Year for 2017.

Athens Regional Library System is currently in the planning phase of a new Strategic Direction. The library's numerous successes in carrying out the current strategic plan played a central role in the Athens Regional Library System being named "Georgia Public Library of the Year 2017."

The Athens-Clarke County Library's current strategic plan was approved by the Athens-Clarke County Library Board of Trustees in October 2012. It includes five major focus areas with the accompanying stated goals:

1. Community engagement
   - The community and the library are fully engaged to create opportunities for both individual and community development.

   One of the most active goals in the current strategic plan has resulted in a remarkable increase in community involvement and awareness for the library. The library has collaborated and partnered with multiple local organizations and agencies such as Family Connection, Chess and Community Conference, the Athens Anti-Discrimination Movement, Clarke County School District, various department and schools of the University of Georgia, and the Jeannette Rankin Foundation. The library has partnered with Avid Bookshop, a local independent book store, on exciting author events, including Rosemary Wells and Patrick McDonnell, with Mary Kay Andrews and Terry Brooks scheduled for the near future. The library added daily afterschool programs for teens for the 2017-2018 school year featuring programming by local organizations and businesses, which have been made possible with a full-time VISTA volunteer. The library conducted a successful publicity campaign, Reimagine Your Library, and has served as an early voting site for elections over the last two years.

2. Lifelong learning, including use of beyond-the-basics technology
   - Residents are supported in becoming lifelong learners, with opportunities to use and produce information resources including current and developing technologies.

   Toward this goal, the library has established a digital media center for use by all ages, greatly expanding programming for teenagers, connecting patrons with volunteer job searching coaches, and offering classes for using computer programs, online resources, and social media. The library gives patrons the unique opportunity to experience exciting technology, such as virtual reality gaming, 3D printing, and unique software for editing sound, graphics and video.

3. Early literacy and family literacy
   - Children, their families, care providers, and teachers receive services to help children enter school ready to learn, and to help families achieve reading success.

   To help meet this goal, the library has successfully managed a Prime Time family literacy grant, increased summer reading participation and outreach, and strengthened school and homeschool relationships. Working with the Free Library of Philadelphia, Athens-Clarke County Library is developing a new

outreach program which uses cooking and recipes to build literacy through experiences with gaining culinary skills. The program will begin with introducing English to Spanish speakers in Athens.

4. Local culture and heritage
   * Residents use the library to understand, appreciate, and preserve the cultural life of the community.

Most notably, the library was awarded a Common Heritage grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2016. A year-long focus on African-American History in Athens was met with approval and interest by the community and the library profession. The grant funded efforts to work with the local African-American community to preserve its history through digitizing family records. Library staff presented a well-received program session, "Turning Common Heritage into Common History: Preserving Local African American History," at the 2018 Public Library Association Conference in Philadelphia. The library has also established an indie author fair, which has now been held for two years. This popular program offers an opportunity for self-published authors to showcase their works in an expo atmosphere, along with educational sessions on publishing, marketing, and other industry-related topics. The library has also become the host site for the community's Green Life Expo, which aims to teach individuals and organizations about environmental sustainability through exhibits and panel sessions. Also, the library has established itself as a gallery space for art exhibitions. Some recent exhibitions have included works by renowned metalworker and sculptor Harold Rittenberry, painter and sculptor Robert Clements, a joint exhibition by painter and community activist Broderick Flanagan and self-taught artist James Barnes, contemporary artist Gunnar Nelson, and painter Will Eskridge.

5. Strengthen the library's capacity
   * The community is served by highly-trained and innovative staff who work together to ensure that services are provided efficiently and effectively.

A three-year project has resulted in completely revised personnel policies; public policies will be revised under the next strategic plan. Library administration has made directed efforts to offer staff of all levels opportunities for involvement and input into the library's activities and services and increased options for participating in library conferences and training workshops.

1. Statement of Need

"I've always felt unequal because I'm homeless. People have always looked through me or avoided me. I've felt shunned by the human race just because I don't have a job. In the last year I feel like I've become a member of the library community. People know my name and talk with me, not to me. I count." ---patron speaking of the Homeless Engagement Initiative at Dallas Public Library.

The American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, states, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." But what if accessibility is denied not by rules and regulations, but rather by the patron's own sense of self and place in society? Public libraries strive to be a community hub, to embrace a diversity of viewpoints, to provide services for everyone who walks through their doors. But trauma, such as homelessness, PTSD, violence, mental and physical illnesses, and other societal ills, can prevent many from seeking out service, even when it seems to be so readily available to them. Athens-Clarke County Library staff encounters a wide variety of patrons each day. The Library's story time programs are full. Its meeting rooms host programming by an array of community organizations. Use of traditional library services is robust. And yet, each day, the community's disenfranchised await the opening of the Library doors. These residents use the space as a comfortable resting place; otherwise, they don't engage.

Over the past decade, there has been a groundswell of federal, state, and local efforts to translate research on trauma, toxic stress and resilience into trauma-informed practices across multiple sectors, including agency-, school-, and community-based settings. Trauma-informed care is a universal framework that requires changes to the practices, policies, and culture of an entire organization or service setting so that all staff: (1) realize the impact of trauma, toxic stress, and adverse childhood experiences; (2) recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma; (3) respond by fully integrating this knowledge into policies procedures and practices; and (4) resist further harm[1]. With a trauma-informed approach individuals are viewed through a 'trauma lens' that sees behaviors, emotions, responses, and attitudes as an accumulation of survival skills created in response to traumatic experiences. More specifically, SAMSHA[1] outlines six core principles central to trauma-informed policies, practices and procedures for organizations, systems and communities. Yatchmenoff et al.[2] helpfully collapse these principles into three major domains: (1) *restoring power* through choice, empowerment, strengths perspective and skill building; (2) *creating safe context* through trustworthiness, choice, transparency, predictability, boundary setting, emotional safety,

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[1] SAMSHA (2017, February). SAMSHA spotlight: A series on building resilient and trauma informed communities: An introduction. Retrieved from: https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Spotlight-Building-Resilient-and-Trauma-Informed-Communities-Introduction/SMA17-5014

[2] Yatchmenoff, D. K., Sundborg, S. A., & Davis, M. A. (2017). Implementing Trauma-Informed Care: Recommendations on the Process. Advances in Social Work, 18(1), 167-185.

physical safety; and (3) *building self-worth* through relationship, respect, compassion, mutuality, collaboration, nonjudgment.

Too often, young girls in underserved communities lack the necessary tools and resources for girls' empowerment. There is a lack of safe spaces for girls of color and girls of working class families, especially in low-income areas. In Athens-Clarke County, girls of diverse backgrounds typically do not have access to inclusive spaces where they can practice 'self-definition' and 'self-valuation' (Collins, 1990), skills essential for personal growth and development. An interview with a high school counselor in the Athens-Clarke County School District suggests that many girls in this community struggle to cope with the trauma of broken families and dysfunctional home lives. As a result, these girls often look to romantic relationships for some sense of fulfillment and self-worth. The high school counselor suggests that the girls need to learn how to communicate effectively, maintain healthy relationships, work across differences, and solve problems without resorting to violence. When girls struggle to navigate their personal lives, it ultimately has a multitude of effects on their achievement in academic and professional settings.

Last year the Awareness to Action, Community Summit on Trauma and Toxic Stress was convened in Athens. This event, drawing together professionals from education, law enforcement, criminal justice, child welfare, mental health, other social service providers, and community members, evidences the community's concern and interest in establishing a trauma-informed approach to addressing issues facing many of its residents.

Athens-Clarke County Library aims to address the serious issues of societal disenfranchisement and female childhood trauma by establishing a two-pronged project that will move the Library toward a trauma-informed approach to connect vulnerable people in our community and to establish a sustainable system for training the Library's staff and partners to become trauma-informed practitioners. The Library is already seen by many as a safe place, our goal is to be able to do more to affect positive change in the lives of our many community members who are in need.

Instituting a trauma-informed library will support each of the Library's core values:
- INCLUSIVE – Library services will be promoted to all of our counties' diverse populations. The Library will improve services to the target communities by examining and revising policies and procedures, staff training, and outreach efforts. The efforts and outcomes from this project will have a positive and lasting effect on every individual touched by the approach. Becoming a trauma-informed library will reflect our values outwards to staff and customers and enable everyone to expand their horizons in an atmosphere of safe exploration.
- Supportive of our COMMUNITY – The work and results from this project will enable the Library to further support the success of our community by strengthening connections between its members and its service agencies. This Library is an

accessible public resource for the open communication of ideas and information, offering trusted spaces for those seeking assistance in meeting life goals.
- RESPECTFUL – The Library, and this program, seeks to treat every person fairly and impartially, providing equitable access to everyone, especially those who are experiencing trauma in their lives. This program will give the Library opportunities to validate the voices of the often unheard. Those participating in the programs activities will be see that they can treated fairly, impartially, and equitably.
- Committed to EXCELLENCE – Library staff will be given a new approach for serving the community with the highest standards of performance, quality, and empathy.
- WELCOMING – The Library understands its unique, vital connection to the people it serves. This project will help the Library identify more ways to become a trusted space for all in the community.

2. Impact

Trauma-informed Services for Adults

Incorporating a trauma-informed care framework into the Library may include:
- Staff training and education on trauma and trauma-informed care. This includes recognizing signs of and triggers for trauma and trauma-informed practices that can serve customers more effectively (i.e., helping customers regulate emotions, understanding why customers may get frustrated easily or have difficulty accessing services/resources).
- Providing holistic, integrated librarianship that includes awareness of trauma-related resources and supports, crisis/emergency assistance, and facilitating access these resources.
- Incorporating a more culturally inclusive understanding of risk and resilience and the culturally-specific values, beliefs, traditions, practices, and ways of knowing that may mitigate risk.
- Thoroughly reviewing current policies, practices, and procedures to avoid re-traumatizing customers.
- Conducting an environmental scan to determine if anything needs to be done to create a safe, calm, and welcoming building for customers (i.e., design, security, etc.)
- Creating programming for diverse populations that nurtures and celebrates culturally-specific protective factors (i.e., allowing customers to reclaim their history through stories and storytelling, healing library toolkits[3], partnering with local organizations and agencies to provide supportive programming, etc.)
- Effective and appropriate reflective supervision of employees that recognizes the impact of this area of library service provision on the Library's staff. Supervision should ideally be a reflective process that offers both a physical and emotional safe space to examine the work of staff and should promote growth,

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[3] http://www.curiouscitydpw.com/2017/10/17/healing-library/

competence, and effective service delivery. The supervisory role includes three
components: educational, supportive, and administrative. [4]

Trauma-informed Services for Teenaged Girls

The teen-focused component of the project will serve to establish safe places for high
school girls to belong. The goal is to inspire personal development for female-identified
students by teaching life-skills and strategies for academic and social success, while
recognizing and allowing for experiences of trauma in school and at home. This
component of the project aims to build self-defined youth girls, who can productively
navigate their own lives into adulthood and become leaders in their schools and
communities.

This component involves a year-long after school program that teaches leadership
skills, such as written and oral communication, relationship building, conflict resolution,
and teamwork. Girls will also receive the opportunity to obtain professional training in
communications including: Research and Analysis, Strategic Planning, Public Speaking,
Visual Design and Media Relations.

Serving girls in the 9th to the 12th grade, this arm of the project will give young girls a
space to have open and honest dialogue, learn to work with other girls, and become
leaders in their schools and communities. As members participate in the program
throughout their four years of high school, they will partake in different activities,
including meetings, workshops, events, and community service. As members approach
their 12th grade year, they will have the opportunity to participate in a Leader Camp, a
communications intensive summer training program. Leader Camp will allow rising
senior girls to develop and organize a unique program that will serve the underclassmen
girls at their school during the upcoming school year.

During the weeklong camp, rising senior girls will prepare to be mentors in the program.
Leader Camp will give the rising senior girls the tools and resources to effectively plan
icebreakers, interactive activities, fundraisers, events, and community service, which
collectively aims to address the contemporary issues and trauma facing teen girls. They
will learn about diversity and inclusivity, specifically in regards to issues facing women
and girls as well as other underrepresented groups. They will learn how to facilitate
important discussions about social and political issues that inherently affect the lives of
girls from all backgrounds. Additionally, they will learn how to articulate their own unique
experiences in order to address adversity and other life topics that aren't necessarily
addressed in the classroom.

Through the program described above, this teen peer-mentoring program will seek to
expand girls' empowerment to girls in underserved communities by giving them the
necessary tools and resources to implement community organizing and advocate for

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[4] Berger, R., & Quiros, L. (2014). Supervision for trauma-informed practice. *Traumatology, 20*(4), 296.

issues that are important to them. The aim is to amplify the voices of girls in underserved communities by increasing opportunities for education and empowerment.

Bringing social work interns into the Library to interact with underserved people will help develop trust between this vulnerable population and Library staff by identifying the needs of these patrons and by training staff. Creating a trauma-informed staff, which is able to follow and understand behaviors and cues, will create a safe and welcoming space where society's most fragile can become empowered to connect. Establishing a peer-mentoring program at the Library to serve the county's high schools will help address some of the issues of young women at risk before social disenfranchisement becomes entrenched into adulthood.

3. Project Design

Trauma-informed Services for Adults

The University of Georgia School of Social Work student interns will engage in six credits of internship over two semesters, with specific curriculum that integrates their internship activities with classroom learning. The purpose of the internship is to gain experience and master social work competencies with a specific practice context. The nine core competencies, and ways they could be met through activities set in the Library, are outlined in the attached table.

Students in their internship work two to three days per week, and are provided at least one hour of supervision (individual or group) with an experienced MSW practitioner.

Plan of Student Activities:

In order to establish an effective library-based, trauma-informed, social work program, students will, under the supervision of the MSW practitioner and School of Social Work faculty, engage in the following activities in four overlapping phases.

Phase 1: Assessment (1-2 months)
- To engage key players from the Library and the community in this project, and to assess priorities for action, students will:
    - Survey Library staff to identify areas of training related to social work (e.g. trauma, the social service safety net, needs of veterans) in which they would like additional training
    - Survey Library staff and key stakeholders (e.g. local school staff, homeless shelter staff) to identify potential areas for student intervention beyond information brokering and advocacy for library patrons
    - Outreach to community agencies to inform them of the library social work program, to learn about and document the services the agency provides, and to develop streamlined communication paths for referral of library patrons to agency services

   o Engage library patrons, particularly those vulnerable patrons who frequent the Library regularly, to build relationship and learn about their needs.

Phase 2: Implementation (month 3 through completion of grant)
- Grounded in the information gathered in Phase 1, students will:
  - Coordinate meetings between Library staff and Dr. Jennifer Elkins (UGA faculty member with significant trauma expertise) to provide training and planning on moving the Library to a trauma-informed environment
  - Develop and offer trainings to Library staff on topics of social work relevance and staff interest, with support from Dean Anna Scheyett, establishing an ongoing training program for current staff to train new staff as a regular part of the Library's onboarding process.
  - Serve as information brokers regarding social services for library patrons, and educate patrons and the community about this service
  - Serve as advocates for vulnerable patrons who may have particular difficulty accessing services
  - Create and offer other programs based on needs identified in Phase 1 (e.g. a group for students to help with homework and teach self-regulation skills, one on one job-seeking skill training).

Phase 3: Evaluation (baseline at month 3 through completion of grant)
- Students will work with faculty member Dr. Jennifer Elkins and Dean Anna Scheyett to identify and measure <u>outputs</u> such as:
  - Number of community agencies contacted by students
  - Number of Library staff and other stakeholders surveyed
  - Number of patrons provided with information
  - Number of trainings for Library staff
  - Number of additional services provided by students, as per Phase 2
- Students will work with faculty member Dr. Jennifer Elkins and Dean Anna Scheyett to identify and measure <u>outcomes</u> such as:
  - Number of completed referrals, where patron actually connected with the recommended social service
  - Interviews with patrons who used a social service to find out if it had the desired impact
  - Interviews with service providers to see if they ever recommended that their clients use the library social work program
  - Patron survey of satisfaction with the social work program
  - Impact of social work program on number of disruptions or incidents in the Library
  - Library staff survey to determine any increase in their sense of competence when dealing with vulnerable patrons.

Phase 4: Dissemination (final 3 months of grant and beyond)
- Students will work with faculty, Library leadership, and MSW supervisor to disseminate the findings from this project by:

- Presentation at national social work conferences such as the Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting
- Presentation at state and national library conferences such as Georgia Public Library Directors' Meeting, Georgia Library Conference, Public Library Association Conference, and American Library Association Conference
- Presentation to local agency partners and Athens Inter-agency and Community Council
- Submission of article to peer-reviewed journals in social work, such as *Journal of Community Practice, New Social Worker, Journal of Poverty*
- Submission of article to library professional journals such as Georgia Library Quarterly, Public Libraries, and Library Journal
- Creation of a toolkit based on the project, to be posted on the School of Social Work website.

Trauma-informed Services for Teenaged Girls

The teen peer-mentoring program will work to provide a safe space for young girls in underserved communities to organize and advocate for issues that matter to them. The participating young women will meet together weekly to address current issues and real-life situations that affect their academic, professional, social, and personal lives.

In order to implement the program at both Clarke Central High School and Cedar Shoals High School in Athens-Clarke County, the Library will contract for the duration of the grant with a Programming Specialist trained in women's studies and peer mentoring concepts. The Specialist will research, survey, and assess needs for the target group in this community and will coordinate with school officials to establish this mentoring group in the schools. The Specialist will develop a specific curriculum/outline for the meetings and programs, basing activities and goals from professionally identified and accepted social work and women's studies standards.

During one week the Library will host a Leader Camp for ten rising senior girls from both Cedar Shoals and Clarke Central High School. Lead by the Programming Specialist, the girls will participate in a four-day training session, in which the Specialist will assist the group in creating a schoolyear program for the club chapter at their school. Using digital resources at the Library, such as computers, Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, and Microsoft Suite, the girls will develop a programming booklet, which will consist of a yearlong plan to implement the peer-mentoring program at their schools. The booklet will outline meeting and workshop agendas, events, community service, and a club media kit. The media kit will consist of media contact lists, PSAs, press releases, fliers, and school announcements to help promote club activities in the school and community. The booklet will also include a tactical calendar with specific dates and times that all club activities will be implemented. After the session, the girls will publish their booklets to guide facilitating the program during the upcoming schoolyear.

As the schoolyear approaches, one teacher sponsor at each school, who has volunteered to help facilitate the program, along with the senior girls at each school, will kick-off the peer-mentoring program with an intake week to recruit new members at their school. The intake week will include fun games and activities and initiate the club registration process. After registration, the girls will meet after school once a week. They will host nominations and elections for the chapter's senior leadership team, including roles and positions. Then, the underclassmen will be split up into fairly even groups and be assigned one to two senior mentors per group.

During the lifetime of the grant the Specialist will be present to participate in the weekly meetings and model processes and opportunities for the future. These training processes and group experiences will establish a self-sustaining means of training each year's underclassmen to become the mentors and leaders in following years.

At every meeting, girls will get into their mentoring groups and be led in different icebreakers, activities, and discussions. Members may also participate in activities and events and community service that may be outside of the school. In addition, the senior girls from each school will meet at the Library every other week to prepare club activities as they come up throughout the school year and participate in senior workshops that will assist them in applying to higher education, writing scholarship essays, building resumes, and exploring opportunities for the future after high school graduation.

An integral output for this portion of the grant project will be composition of a plan for reproducing this type of trauma-informed peer-mentoring group for teens so that the approach can be reproduced by other library and school partnerships in other locations.

Evaluation of the peer-mentoring project will include:
•	Increased accessibility of girls' empowerment
•	Increased girls' participation in extracurricular activities
•	Introduction of a safe space for girls to learn and practice life-skills
•	Promotion of sisterhood and solidarity amongst adolescent girls
•	Amplification of girls' voices in the community.

Summary

This dual plan for training staff and participants to become more informed about the experiences and effects of trauma in the lives of our community members addresses the issue from two separate, but intertwined pathways. Meeting people where they are, with the needs they bring, and knowing how to assist them to access opportunities available to them, has great potential to further the Library's ability to serve as a great asset in our world.