

## **Organizational Profile**

**Applicant organization name:** Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation

### **1. Organization mission and brief history:**

The mission of the Free Library of Philadelphia is to advance literacy, guide learning, and inspire curiosity. Its vision is to build an enlightened community devoted to lifelong learning. These mission and vision statements – along with its updated Strategic Plan – were affirmed by the Free Library of Philadelphia Board of Directors in April 2018. Please see the Strategic Plan Summary attachment for more details.

The Free Library of Philadelphia was established in 1891 as a "general library which shall be free to all." With 54 locations and the Rosenbach, the Free Library fulfills its mission by offering access to millions of digital and physical materials; 25,000 yearly programs and services; free public computers and extensive Wi-Fi, including neighborhood Hotspots; and rich special collections. With millions of in-person visits and millions more online annually, the Free Library and the Rosenbach are among the most widely used educational and cultural institutions in Philadelphia and boast a worldwide reach.

The Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation supports the Free Library of Philadelphia as a center for learning and opportunity in every neighborhood, for every Philadelphian. Together, the Library and the Foundation enrich the lives of citizens by encouraging civic dialogue, cultural engagement, community participation, and the free exchange of ideas. Wide-ranging services include computer classes, culinary literacy programs, senior services, support for job seekers, small businesses, and New Americans, outreach services to incarcerated people, special exhibitions, Author Events, the annual *One Book, One Philadelphia* program, and more.

### **2. Organizational service area:**

The Free Library's primary service area is the city of Philadelphia, which has a population of nearly 1.6 million people. According to the US Census Bureau, people of color and immigrants accounted for two-thirds of the city's population in 2016 (which was approximately 44% African American, 14% Latino/Hispanic, and 7% Asian). At least 13% of Philadelphians are foreign-born, and 22% speak a language other than English at home. Importantly, one-quarter of the population lives below the poverty line, with a citywide median income of \$39,770. Only 26% of city residents above the age of 25 have obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher.

### **3. Paschalville Partnership Overview:**

The Free Library serves as the backbone organization for the Paschalville Partnership, a collective impact collaboration of 11 organizations brought together by the Free Library's Paschalville Library, which is situated in a historically underserved area of Southwest Philadelphia. Funded by a three-year IMLS National Leadership Grant (2016-2019), the Partnership works to reduce barriers to employment for residents of Southwest Philadelphia, particularly among the area's substantial populations of New Americans and re-entry individuals. In addition to the Paschalville Library, the Partnership's primary partners are Southwest Community Development Corporation (Southwest CDC), Mayor's Office of Adult Education (OAE), The Common Place/CityLights Network, and Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity (CEO), along with six other city and community partners. Long a trusted community anchor institution, the Paschalville Library has now become a local hub for New Americans and other non-native English speakers, those recently released from incarceration, and other job seekers with interrupted work histories.

## **Strategic Plan 2018-2020 Summary**

The mission of the Free Library of Philadelphia is to advance literacy, guide learning, and inspire curiosity. Its vision is to build an enlightened community devoted to lifelong learning. The Free Library of Philadelphia Board of Trustees and the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation Board of Directors affirmed these mission and vision statements and approved an updated Strategic Plan in April 2018.

The Free Library's Strategic Plan 2018-2020 builds upon the goals and vision of its most recently completed Strategic Plan (2012-2017). The key elements of the updated Strategic Plan are the following:

- **Build a culture of literacy in Philadelphia:**
  - The Free Library will design a continuum of programs and services that meets the literacy needs of children, youth, and families.
  - The Free Library will expand the capacity to develop, support, and grow multiple adult literacies (via its Culinary Literacy Center, Business Resource & Information Center, etc.).
  - The Free Library will **nurture mission-driven partnerships and implement engagement strategies that advance the Library's ongoing response to community needs.**
  
- **Deliver an exceptional customer experience:**
  - The Free Library will implement comprehensive training and professional development for all staff, **with an emphasis on diversity and inclusion.**
  - The Free Library will **engage communities to identify their needs and the best means to address them.**
  - The Free Library will create welcoming physical and digital environments.
  - The Free Library will establish the Center for Public Life as a leading catalyst for civic dialogue and cultural engagement.
  
- **Embrace creativity and innovation:**
  - The Free Library will **encourage staff to experiment, explore, and challenge the status quo.**
  - The Free Library will work across departments to devise collaborative, creative solutions and improved means of communication.
  - The Free Library will **foster leadership, partnerships, and creativity that can lead to new opportunities.**
  - The Free Library will develop mechanisms to continuously assess the environment and external landscape in order to adapt to unanticipated change.

As noted in the Narrative section, the proposed *Catalyzing a Community-Led* future initiative will align perfectly with the goals and timing of this Strategic Plan, as it directly addresses the evolving role of libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Alignment with the Partnership's current and proposed work is most evident in the Free Library's goal of "**nurturing mission-driven partnerships and implementing engagement strategies that advance the Free Library's ongoing response to community needs,**" its "**emphasis on diversity and inclusion training**" for staff, its plan to "**engage communities to identify their needs and the best means to address them**", and its goal of encouraging staff to "**experiment, explore, and challenge the status quo**" and "**foster leadership, partnerships and creativity that can lead to new opportunities.**"

## **Proposal Narrative**

### ***1. Statement of Need***

#### **Project Overview: A Community-Led Future**

The Free Library of Philadelphia serves as the backbone organization for the Paschalville Partnership, a collective impact collaboration of 11 organizations brought together by the Free Library's Paschalville Library, which is situated in a historically underserved area of Southwest Philadelphia. Funded by a three-year IMLS National Leadership Grant (2016-2019), the Partnership works to reduce barriers to employment for residents of Southwest Philadelphia, particularly among the area's substantial populations of New Americans and re-entry individuals. In addition to the Paschalville Library, the Partnership's primary partners are Southwest Community Development Corporation (Southwest CDC), Mayor's Office of Adult Education (OAE), The Common Place/CityLights Network, and Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity (CEO), along with six other city and community partners. Long a trusted community anchor institution, the Paschalville Library has now become a local hub for New Americans and other non-native English speakers, those recently released from incarceration, and other job seekers with interrupted work histories.

Now in its final year of National Leadership Grant funding, the Partnership plans to continue its work to support New Americans, the re-entry population, and job seekers from all walks of life in Southwest Philadelphia. At the same time, the Partnership looks forward to making some necessary adjustments to its current model. Through the *Catalyzing a Community-Led Future* initiative, the Paschalville Library (working with community partners Southwest CDC, The Common Place/CityLights Network, and First Person Arts) will spearhead a participatory, community-driven needs assessment of residents and small business owners in the Elmwood and Woodland neighborhoods of Southwest Philadelphia. The Partnership will encourage participants to provide input on a broad range of issues, from employment to local environmental issues to transportation to childcare, and will also ask for feedback on the Free Library's ability to effectively and equitably address community needs. With their permission, the Partnership will collect and document participants' concerns and challenges, personal stories, insights on the Free Library's role in confronting community problems, and recommendations for the Partnership's next steps, all of which will be shared with multiple audiences.

The Partnership views the *Catalyzing a Community-Led Future* initiative as having a dual purpose. In addition to deepening and expanding its resident engagement efforts, the initiative will enable the Free Library to evaluate its own role as a community organization that can effectively catalyze social change beyond its walls. In addition to other evaluative measures, the Free Library is eager to administer the IMLS Performance Survey toward the close of the grant period to all relevant staff. The survey will assess the extent to which they feel the Free Library is better prepared to respond to community needs, engage community members, maintain ongoing relationships with community partners, and serve as an active contributor to community problem solving. Moreover, the Free Library will administer modified versions of this survey to its community partners, and may conduct exit interviews with community resident participants, to assess their views on the Free Library's capacity to offer programs, services, or resources that address community needs and contribute to local problem solving efforts.

This performance data will be useful for both internal and external evaluation and replication purposes. First, it will allow the Free Library to better understand its role as a community organization in neighborhoods across Philadelphia, many of which are underserved. These results will also inform the Free Library's strategic, institution-wide efforts to deepen its community engagement activities on multiple levels. Crucially, the

initiative's learnings will also be shareable with other institutions in the Library, Archive, and Museum (LAM) field as they explore similar approaches to achieving authentic community engagement. For example, the Partnership plans to create and share a digital toolkit – including sample job descriptions and partner agreements, community meeting agendas, and survey tools, among other elements – that other LAMs and collective impact collaborations may access and use as templates. Through this opportunity, the Free Library seeks to strengthen itself as a community asset and model for other LAM institutions.

## **Project Concept**

The Paschalville Partnership's mission is to leverage the Library as a hub for job seekers by bringing together a broad array of community partners in support of Southwest Philadelphia residents. The Partnership, which follows the principles of collective impact, has made substantial progress toward meeting its mission over the past two years – particularly around streamlining and reinforcing service delivery for non-native English speaking job seekers in the area. It has also succeeded in strengthening relationships and continuous communication between its partner members.

At the same time, however, the Partnership acknowledges the limitations of the collective impact model as initially conceived. The initiative was largely designed by an advisory council that included workforce development experts and representatives of local nonprofit organizations, only some of whom were neighborhood residents. The 2014 planning process therefore incorporated the views and prioritized the visions of the individuals on the advisory council and may not have sufficiently incorporated the needs and priorities of area residents. For example, the 2016 unemployment rate in the zip code surrounding the Paschalville Library reached over 17%.<sup>1</sup> Though local participation in Partnership-led programs for jobseekers (such as Employment Boot Camps and Job Fairs) has increased over the course of the Partnership, participation has not increased at rates commensurate with community need. To address this disconnect, the Library seeks to maximize this opportunity to reassess its original methodology and recast its work through an equity lens, with the ultimate goal of more authentic community engagement leading to real change for Southwest Philadelphia residents.

To ensure that the community is included at every stage of this assessment process, the Partnership will recruit, train and hire six local residents to serve on its Southwest Philadelphia Resident Consultant Team (RCT) and four residents as Neighborhood Ambassadors (NAs). The RCT will review and provide feedback during the assessment design process, and will guide the Partnership in selecting the research tools and methodologies they believe will work best in their community. Using these tools, the NAs will then reach out to their neighbors, friends, and colleagues to gather quantitative and qualitative data, including personal stories, with the goal of developing a better understanding of local needs and priorities. During the same time period, the Southwest Community Development Corporation (Southwest CDC)'s Business Outreach team will visit small business owners along the major commercial corridors in Southwest Philadelphia to assess their needs and share local resources. The RCT and NAs will also incorporate principles of asset-based community development in creating a comprehensive neighborhood asset map. Finally, the *Catalyzing a Community-Led Future* initiative will receive support from the Free Library's Community Organizer for Southwest Philadelphia (to be hired in Summer 2018) as well as Southwest CDC, The Common Place/CityLights, and First Person Arts.

## **Community Challenges and Needs**

Even within Philadelphia, the poorest of the 10 largest cities in the United States<sup>2</sup>, the neighborhood surrounding Paschalville Library (represented in the data below as zip code 19142) faces greater hurdles than many other parts of the city. In addition to its high populations of New Americans/non-native English speakers and returning citizens, it has few public transit options and limited connectivity with the rest of the city and its

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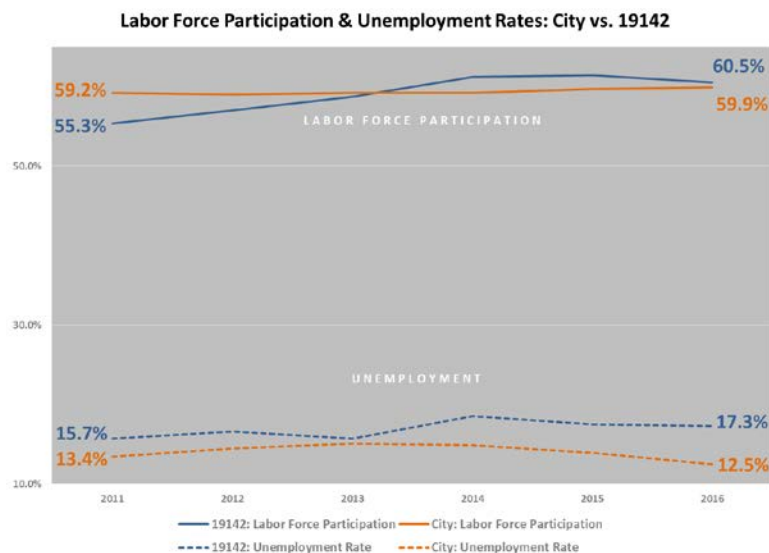
<sup>1</sup> 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. US Census Bureau.

<sup>2</sup> *State of the City Report*, The Pew Charitable Trusts (Philadelphia Research Initiative). April 2017.

suburbs. With much of the area historically zoned for industrial uses, 19142 sits adjacent to environmental hazards such as a former landfill and declared Superfund site. The area also contends with a high concentration of scrap yard and auto-body repair businesses as well as long-closed businesses and vacant lots. Southwest’s major commercial corridors, Elmwood Avenue and Woodland Avenue, have attracted some reinvestment in recent years, but the sections of these corridors that fall within 19142 have lagged behind, with vacant storefronts remaining commonplace. Moreover, the City of Philadelphia has deemed this area a “service desert,” where the needs of residents far outstrip the availability of services to them.<sup>3</sup>

Geographic Area	19142 Zip Code		City of Philadelphia	
	2015	2016	2015	2016
Total population	28,595	28,221	1,555,072	1,559,938
Population growth (2011-2015, 2012-2016)	-5.8%	-3.8%	2.7%	2.2%
Median household income	\$ 31,191	\$ 29,972	\$ 38,523	\$ 39,770
Poverty rate (% of total pop.)	33.2%	33.2%	26.4%	25.9%
Foreign born (% of total pop.)	20%	21%	13%	13%
Did not graduate high school	24%	21%	18%	17%
High school graduate or equivalent	38%	39%	34%	33%
Some college, no degree	22%	23%	23%	23%
College graduate	16%	17%	26%	27%

It is clear that the majority of Southwest residents want to work. In recent years, more working-age residents have joined the labor force by seeking employment opportunities, though the rate of participation has diminished somewhat in the past year. Indeed, the labor-force participation rate in zip code 19142 slightly outpaces that of the city overall. At the same time, however, many residents are not connecting with employment opportunities, as the 19142 unemployment rate remains 4-5 points above the city’s overall rate.



Sources: 2015 data (2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates); 2016 data (2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates); 2011 data (2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates); 2012 data (2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)

Paschalville Library staff members learned the individual stories behind these statistics on a near-daily basis in their experiences with local patrons and job seekers. Many of the residents who came to Paschalville faced barriers to employment well beyond those of the typical job seeker, including low educational attainment, underdeveloped job skills, interrupted work histories, and a lack of English-language proficiency, among others.

<sup>3</sup> Philadelphia 2035 Lower Southwest District Plan, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, May 2016. <https://www.phila2035.org/lower-southwest>

As a response to these large-scale community challenges, the Paschalville Partnership collective impact initiative was formed in 2014.

The Partnership's primary goal was to address the negative impacts of low adult literacy and high unemployment on the economic and social well-being of Southwest Philadelphia residents. While there were many social service agencies addressing pieces of these problems, there was also a lack of coordinated efforts between agencies with overlapping missions. This silo-based approach led to duplication of efforts, inefficient uses of resources, missed opportunities for leveraging resources, and an inability to track clients from agency to agency because of a lack of data sharing. The Partnership was created as a collective impact framework to address these issues and explore new, cost-effective ways to share resources and data with partners to better serve our most vulnerable populations.

The Free Library's Paschalville location (6942 Woodland Ave.), with its focus on improving Library services for job seekers and low literate adults in Southwest Philadelphia and its status as a trusted community anchor institution, was a natural fit to serve as the "backbone" organization of this collective impact initiative. With generous support from an IMLS Planning Grant in 2013, the Partnership embarked upon a year-long planning process that relied heavily on input from its Advisory Council of six partner organizations (including the City of Philadelphia), three of which were located in the Southwest. Supported by a team of research consultants, this Advisory Council conducted a basic needs assessment and SWOT analysis, with a primary focus on jobseekers from the New American and re-entry populations. Adhering closely to the collective impact model, the Partnership Advisory Council came to a consensus on a common agenda, mechanisms for shared measurement and continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities.

### **Paschalville Partnership Activities Overview: 2016-2018**

A National Leadership Grant in early 2016 allowed the Partnership to move into the implementation phase, during which three main components were conceived and offered. These include:

1. **Ongoing Job Seeker Support:** According to the Free Library's December 2017 Impact Evaluation report, job seekers view the Free Library as a valuable resource, with 29% of visitors reporting that they had visited the Free Library to look for a new job or learn new skills for a job in the last 12 months. Additionally, 62% of job seekers reported applying for a new job, 32% reported getting a new job, and 23% reported getting a better job with the help of Free Library programs and resources.<sup>4</sup> The Paschalville Library provides the following services to job seekers:
  - Its on-site Digital Resource Specialist (DRS), whose job is to boost the digital literacy of customers by providing one-on-one assistance and small-group instruction in the use of technical resources, staffs the Paschalville Library Job Readiness Lab (JRL), a special bank of computers set aside for job seekers to use for up to three hours per visit. The DRS also offers support to job seekers at all points along their search process (e.g., creating a résumé or LinkedIn profile, navigating search engines, exploring PA CareerLink's Job Gateway system).
  - Building on the Paschalville JRL's successes, the Free Library worked with Southwest CDC to open a second JRL at their location, with an Employment Specialist onsite providing free support to job seekers inside a lab that holds eight computers with no set time limits.
  - Moreover, Paschalville Library regularly offers job search support to residents of SELF Inc./Outlet House, a nearby emergency shelter for homeless and formerly incarcerated men.

2. **Job Fairs and Boot Camps:** In addition to ongoing job search support, the Partnership hosts special workshops and events throughout the year, including:

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<sup>4</sup> *Free Library of Philadelphia Impact Evaluation Report*, December 2017. Fels Institute of Government, University of Pennsylvania.  
<https://libwww.freelibrary.org/assets/pdf/about/impact-evaluation-report.pdf>

- Employment Boot Camps: These free, four-day courses cover topics such as resume review, interview preparation, signing up for Gmail and LinkedIn, and financial management/empowerment. Boot Camps are hosted quarterly at Southwest CDC and led by Southwest CDC's Employment Specialist.
- Job Fairs: Job fairs are hosted in the spring and fall at Paschalville Library, featuring employers representing sectors such as customer service, education, retail, sales, warehousing, and security. The Partnership has invited the local arts organization First Person Arts to participate in some of its job fairs, to help attendees frame their personal and professional narratives before meeting with potential employers.

The Partnership also provides targeted services for New Americans and other non-native English speakers, the re-entry population, and adults in need of basic education services. For more details on the Partnership's work with these specific populations, please see the Paschalville Partnership Current Work Overview and Year 1 State of the Community Report attachments (Supportingdoc1 and Supportingdoc2).

## ***2. Impact***

### **Paschalville Partnership: Catalyzing a Community-Led Future**

As evidenced above, the Paschalville Partnership has made strong progress toward fulfilling its mission, particularly around streamlining and reinforcing service delivery for non-native English speaking job seekers in the area and in strengthening relationships between its partner members. However, the Partnership is aware of the collective impact model's limitations. While its original advisory council made its best efforts toward assessing the community's needs and priorities, the input of a more diverse mix of local residents and business owners was nonetheless absent from the planning process.

Moving forward, it would be highly beneficial for the Partnership to more fully understand the basic barriers Southwest residents confront, some of which could be preventing them from accessing or participating in the Partnership's job seeker programs and services. While local service delivery models have undoubtedly improved over the past four years, a broader, community-informed agenda will be necessary to create a lasting impact on metrics such as unemployment and labor force participation. The Partnership will move forward by capitalizing on its previous accomplishments, using the principles of asset-based community development and equity-focused collective impact to reassess resident needs and reexamine neighborhood assets. Through a participatory, community-driven planning process with local residents and small business owners at its core, the Partnership will support local residents as they organize and mobilize around common challenges. Furthermore, the opportunity for Southwest residents to work with a trained, experienced Community Organizer is a unique asset that the Free Library can provide as part of this effort. The Free Library's Southwest Community Organizer will have the capacity to draw on ideas and experiences gleaned from similar efforts launched in other neighborhoods or cities as they seek to build power and organizing skills among local residents.

In doing so, the Partnership will align itself with a general shift in the collective impact field toward deeper, more genuine community engagement. Richard C. Harwood, a key thought leader in the collective impact field, notes that "it is simply not possible to impose a strategy on a community; nor is it possible for a group to impose its own will... the truth is that it is necessary to work with the community" when engaging in collective impact work.<sup>5</sup> Harwood also asserts that "the success of collective impact depends on genuine ownership by the

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<sup>5</sup> Harwood, Richard C. *Putting Community in Collective Impact*. The Collective Impact Forum and Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. August 2017.

larger community that starts with placing a value, not only on expert knowledge, but also on public knowledge that comes only from authentically engaging the community.”<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, “community” must be defined with great intentionality in order to guarantee equity in collective impact models. Junious Williams and Sarah Marxer of the Urban Strategies Council assert the following key principle, which will guide the Partnership’s efforts moving forward: “Deliberately attending to the racial, economic, gender, cultural, and geographic forms of inequity within a community by asking how different parts of the community are affected by an issue and ensuring that the voices of those most affected are included in setting the agenda for change will improve the agenda itself as well as deepen support for it.”<sup>7</sup>

With this overarching goal in mind, the Partnership will work to catalyze greater community involvement through a thoughtful, intentional process as Southwest Philadelphia residents organize to confront local challenges. The Partnership’s chief goal will remain reducing barriers to employment, particularly for New Americans and the re-entry population. At the same time, the Partnership will use this opportunity to correct the imbalance of power unintentionally created through its initial planning process, and the Free Library as a whole will conduct a robust evaluation of its role and its efficacy as a community organization. Results and other learnings from this initiative, which the Free Library will share widely with other LAMs and collective impact models, will then provide valuable insights for other institutions considering similar approaches.

### **Collective Impact with Equity**

The Partnership will take deliberate steps to reframe its collective impact work through an equity lens across all three phases of this initiative. Particularly during Phase 1, it will:

1. Recruit a Resident Consultant Team (RCT) that is as representative as possible of all Southwest residents (including job seekers at various points along the job search process, New Americans from several different countries of origin, returning citizens at various points in the re-entry process, etc.)
2. Recruit Neighborhood Ambassadors (NAs) with intentionality, to make sure that the group includes a wide range of ages, races/backgrounds, etc., to share their insight and expertise.
3. Engage Southwest CDC, a longtime partner with deep ties to local residents and business owners, to reach out to small business owners along commercial corridors in order to assess their needs and priorities. Viewed as a trusted and accessible community organization, the Southwest CDC will build upon its existing relationships with small business owners from all walks of life, particularly among New Americans and non-native English speakers.
4. The Partnership will follow the Urban Strategies Council recommendation to provide “resources to support the involvement of those people for whom participation in multiple meetings is a substantial financial burden.”<sup>8</sup> As such, the Library will recognize the value of participants’ time and expertise by hiring neighborhood residents (for the RCT and as Neighborhood Ambassadors) to serve as paid consultants to lead the planning process.

### **Performance Goals and Metrics**

The Paschalville Partnership’s primary performance goal for ensuring impact through this initiative is genuine, deliberate, and successful community engagement, which will lead to resident empowerment and, ultimately, new employment opportunities and economic well-being for Southwest Philadelphia residents.

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<sup>6</sup> Harwood, *Putting Community in Collective Impact* .

<sup>7</sup> Williams, Junious and Marxer, Sarah. *Bringing an Equity Lens to Collective Impact*. Urban Strategies Council. August 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Williams and Marxer. *Bringing an Equity Lens to Collective Impact*.



To monitor, track, and assess successful community engagement and empowerment, the Partnership will work with the RCT to identify key metrics and shape its evaluation methods. The Partnership will offer the below set of proposed metrics and evaluation methods for the RCT's review, and will incorporate the RCT's feedback and insights in determining final metrics and methods.

- Key outputs may include meeting attendance, social investigation research activities (e.g., number of individual stories/insights gathered through community meals, site visits, interviews, etc.), and number and demographics of community residents “touched” through social investigation and outreach activities.
- Key participant outcomes may include positive changes in participants' attitudes, knowledge, and skill levels as a result of their involvement in the community engagement process (to be assessed via self-reports and project staff observations).
- Key community outcomes may include a higher labor force participation rate and a lower unemployment rate for the 19142 zip code.

Finally, Performance Surveys and/or exit interviews will be conducted with relevant Free Library staff, community partners, and the RCT/NAs to assess their views on the Free Library's efficacy in understanding and addressing community needs/problems. These surveys will be administered by Project Coordinator Annette Mattei, and results will be collected and analyzed by the Free Library's Strategic Initiatives team.

The intent of *Catalyzing a Community-Led Future* is to produce a community-driven plan for the Paschalville Partnership's future, develop a clearer understanding of the Free Library's strengths and challenges as a community asset and seek ways to maximize strengths system-wide, and make substantive contributions toward a set of best practices for LAMs that are interested in playing a key role in community-driven problem solving. A successful initiative will result in 1) the Library becoming a more vital community asset, with improved capacity and staff commitment to offer programs, services, and resources that successfully respond to community needs and contribute to local problem solving efforts; 2) greater Southwest Philadelphia community ownership of the Paschalville Partnership moving forward; and 3) concrete recommendations, in the form of a toolkit and summary report, for more effective approaches to equitable and sustainable LAM services nationally, particularly those efforts focused on affecting positive community change.

### ***3. Project Design***

#### **Work Plan**

The Free Library and Paschalville Partnership propose the following work plan (December 2018-November 2020):

#### ***Phase 1: Planning (December 2018 – April 2019)***

Objective: To form a “Resident Consultant Team” (RCT) to conduct a thorough needs assessment and community-led asset mapping process, with additional training and supervision from the Free Library's soon-to-be-hired Community Organizer for Southwest Philadelphia, Southwest CDC, and First Person Arts.

Steps toward achieving this objective include:

- Working with partnership organizations to identify candidates for the RCT;
- Undertaking a hiring process to staff the RCT;
- Convening the RCT on a monthly basis to inform project activities;

- Seeking the RCT’s guidance on developing a research methodology for Phase 2;
- Enlisting the RCT’s support in forming relationships with key community audiences (e.g., residents, small business owners, and other community-based organizations); and
- Tapping into RCT members’ networks for candidates to be hired as NAs, who will be trained to conduct on-the-ground outreach to gather data on community needs and priorities.

***Phase 2: Research (May 2019 – April 2020)***

**Objective:** To support the RCT in completing a citizen-informed community needs assessment and updated asset map of Southwest Philadelphia.

Steps toward achieving this objective include:

- Working with partners and NAs to gather data and information on key community audiences through various fieldwork methods. As guided by the RCT, the NAs will undertake various forms of “social investigation,” including canvassing, story gathering, community chats, site visits, and interviews.
- The RCT will conduct research to develop a set of recommendations for the Partnership’s next steps, beyond the close of the National Leadership Grant, that reflect and respond to community interests and priorities (as identified by the NAs).

***Phase 3: Recommendations and Implementation (May 2020 – November 2020)***

**Objective:** Empower the RCT to put forth an implementation agenda – for the Free Library, for the Partnership, and for the broader community.

Steps toward achieving this objective include:

- Supporting the RCT in organizing the results of the community needs assessment and asset mapping processes into presentations that the RCT can publicly share at one or more community meetings.
- Working with the RCT to plan one Resource Fair geared toward the re-entry population, as well as two Job Fairs and one Resource Fair geared toward New Americans, with community feedback in mind.
- Working with an IMLS-designated third-party evaluator to assess all program activities during the grant period, with a focus on progress made toward genuine, equitable community involvement.
- Conducting performance surveys and exit interviews with Free Library staff, community partners, and RCTs and NAs on the Free Library’s role in understanding and addressing community needs.

At the conclusion of Phase 3, the Free Library will also disseminate the Partnership’s findings to a range of audiences, from Partnership partners and residents in the Southwest Philadelphia community to Free Library staff and partners to the LAM field as a whole. In order to contribute toward a set of best practices for LAMs that are interested in playing a key role in community-driven problem solving approaches, the Free Library will develop a toolkit and summary report that will be shared broadly. The RCT will produce a community needs assessment summary/presentation, which they will also present locally in one or more community meetings. Finally, project staff may produce digital content that includes blog/social media posts or video footage during the grant period. All of these materials will be hosted on the Free Library’s website and blog.

**Free Library and Community Engagement**

With the groundwork laid by the Paschalville Partnership over the past four years, the Free Library is in a prime position to lead the Partnership in *Catalyzing a Community-Led Future* beginning in 2019. Moreover, this initiative will align perfectly with the goals and timing of the Free Library’s newest strategic plan (2018-2020), which directly addresses the evolving role of libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Alignment with the Partnership is evident in the following elements of the Free Library’s strategic plan: 1) *Building a culture of literacy in Philadelphia*, with a particular focus on nurturing mission-driven partnerships and implementing engagement strategies that advance the Free Library’s ongoing response to community needs; 2) *Delivering an exceptional customer experience*, with an emphasis on diversity and inclusion training for staff, engaging communities to identify their needs and the best means to address them, and establishing the Center for Public Life as a leading catalyst for civic dialogue and cultural engagement; and 3) *Embracing creativity and innovation*, which encourages staff to experiment, explore, and challenge the status quo; foster partnerships that can lead to new opportunities; and develop mechanisms to continually assess the external landscape in order to adapt to unanticipated change.

Other Free Library efforts that will complement and amplify *Catalyzing a Community-Led Future* include:

- The *21<sup>st</sup> Century Libraries Initiative* capital campaign, which led the Free Library to hire Community Organizers around newly renovated library locations in North Philadelphia to listen and better respond to local residents’ needs and challenges;
- Increased funds for the Free Library’s Prison and Re-entry Services program, which includes initiatives that connect incarcerated individuals with their children through family reading sessions and returning citizens and their families with a range of Free Library services and programs;
- Pending applications for state funding to rehabilitate and increase accessibility at older Library facilities, with Paschalville Library slated for renovation in the near future;
- Other collective impact models for which the Free Library serves as a backbone partner, including Read by 4<sup>th</sup> (Philadelphia’s affiliate of the Campaign for Grade Level Reading);
- The *Words at Play* Vocabulary Initiative, a program at two neighborhood libraries in North Philadelphia for families with children from birth to age five that helps strengthen children’s vocabularies through playing, singing, and reading at “Play Parties” and that relies on Neighborhood Ambassadors to promote the program among friends and neighbors; and
- The Free Library’s current IMLS Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Grant, *Skills for Community-Centered Librarianship*, which provides professional development and training for librarians on more effective community engagement strategies.

## **Project Management and Resources**

*Paschalville Partnership: Catalyzing a Community-Led Future* will be planned and implemented by a team of Free Library staff and consultants, Paschalville Partnership core members, and Southwest Philadelphia residents and small business owners.

Planning and implementation staff and consultants include the following (resumes/job descriptions attached):

- Annette Mattei, Metro Metrics LLC (consultant): Ms. Mattei has been Project Coordinator of the Partnership since its inception in 2014, and will continue to serve in a similar role.
- Resident Consultant Team (RCT): The Free Library will hire a six-member RCT to participate in a series of meetings over the course of one year, during which they will help to identify potential Neighborhood Ambassadors, plan a community needs assessment/outreach process, and begin an asset mapping project. RCT meetings will occur at both the Southwest CDC and at Paschalville Library.
- Neighborhood Ambassadors: The Free Library will hire four Neighborhood Ambassadors, who will be overseen by Southwest CDC, to conduct outreach and assess the needs of local residents and small business owners. Collected data will inform the RCT’s needs assessment and asset mapping processes.
- Southwest Philadelphia Community Organizer (staff to be hired): Under the supervision of Miriam Holzman-Lipsitz, the Free Library’s Manager of Community Relations, this Community Organizer will

work alongside the RCT and Neighborhood Ambassadors to mobilize residents/small business owners in the Paschalville area, with the goal of understanding how the Free Library can better serve patrons' needs/interests as well as facilitate community organizing efforts.

- Niema Nelson and Omelio Alexander (Paschalville Library staff): Ms. Nelson and Mr. Alexander will continue to provide direct assistance to job seekers and coordinate Job Fairs and Resource Fairs.
- Joe Benford (Deputy Director of Customer Engagement), and Tiffany Nardella (Southwest Cluster Leader and Special Projects Manager): These two Free Library staff members will continue to serve in a supervisory role, as they have done since the Partnership's inception.
- Nathaniel Eddy (Strategy Coordinator, Strategic Initiatives Department): Mr. Eddy and the Free Library's Strategic Initiatives team will play a significant role in managing the internal evaluation process for relevant Free Library staff, designing external evaluation tools for partners, and supporting overall data collection, synthesis, and analysis. The Strategic Initiatives team will incorporate IMLS's Performance Survey into this process.

### **Roles of Key Partners:**

In addition to renewing the contract of Annette Mattei, Project Coordinator for the Paschalville Partnership, the Free Library will need funds to hire a total of 10 Southwest Philadelphia residents for its Resident Consultant Team and as Neighborhood Ambassadors. Furthermore, the Partnership will contract with its three primary community partners: Southwest CDC, The Common Place/CityLights Network, and First Person Arts. The Partnership will also require funds to cover the food/supply costs of "community chats", its outreach and promotion (including translation services for print materials and community events), and its Job Fairs and Resource Fairs.

Each of the partners listed above complement the competencies of the Free Library, which serves as the Partnership's backbone organization. Project Coordinator Annette Mattei is an experienced researcher with an extensive project management background. Southwest CDC has deep community ties, forges strong relationships with local residents and business owners, and is in a prime position to manage the Neighborhood Ambassadors program and guide resident/small business outreach efforts. The Common Place/CityLights Network serves as a resource hub for the re-entry population and community residents from all walks of life. Finally, First Person Arts offers a unique service by helping individuals define their personal narratives and/or work histories, which reframes how they communicate with potential employers and other community leaders.

Please see the attached Budget and Budget Justification for more details on partner responsibilities and program cost allocations.