

CALIFA GROUP – PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL: The New Face of Library Makerspaces: The Long-Term Effects of Rapid Iteration

The Califa Group, in partnership with Regallium Consulting, LLC, P. Van Halsema Consulting, and Rockman et al, will create and support a new national collective to share resources and learnings about how library makerspaces have shifted post-pandemic. This project builds on the IMLS investments in a 3-year LSTA grant in partnership with the CA State Library that resulted in a toolkit (MakersintheLibrary.org) for building and sustaining community-driven makerspaces in libraries.

Statement of broad need: The COVID-19 pandemic caused a dramatic shift in the way libraries operate and serve their core audiences. Even those who were once reluctant to use technology were forced to find new ways to connect with patrons through virtual programming and kits. These modes of delivery also shone a light on the unequal access to technology and who has the tools, capabilities and capacity to participate in consumption of online programming.

Based on the work from the IMLS supported *Makers in the Library* project, *The New Face of Library Makerspaces* initiative hopes to expand on the learnings and extend it to other libraries across the U.S. *Makers in the Library* set out to support, coach and guide 10 under-resourced libraries across the State of CA to develop and build community-driven makerspaces that meet the needs of their local audiences. In the middle of the project's third year, when libraries were forced to close and suspend most operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, participating sites were able to adapt and shift their services to meet the new challenges in part because of project-based training which promoted operational flexibility and a mindset of lifelong learning.

We now want to better understand how these shifts change the modes of learning that library makerspaces adopt for years to come. Are virtual modes of program delivery viable and will they be valued post-pandemic? Is the fidelity of programs intact if not delivered in-person? How are these programs received across various socio-economic groups? What other modes of delivery were successful in reaching diverse audiences? How can libraries (through a dedicated collective) support each other, develop best practices, and scale capacity to others throughout the country? What are the new metrics of success?

Project Design: Our goal is two-fold. First, we wish to learn how the face of library makerspaces has changed due to the rapid iteration of innovative programming models during the pandemic and capture these findings in a new volume of the *MakersintheLibrary.org* toolkit. Second, in order maximize limited resources, we want to build a diverse collective of libraries that serves as a sustainable professional learning community where library staff can share research, knowledge and best practices. The collective will be led by a designated set of leaders to facilitate and support the team and can be sustainable beyond the limits of this grant funding.

Over the two-year project, we will: (1) Outreach to various organizations such as Nation of Makers, Maker Ed, local and State Libraries and professional library associations such as ALA, PLA, SLA, to survey the field and collect data on the ways that libraries have modified their maker programming due to the pandemic and which (if any) of those changes were sustained. (2) Gather a subset of the original 10 libraries in CA to become the leaders of the collective and co-create the identity, processes, and responsibilities as well as criteria for selection of additional members. (3) Select a digital platform to serve as a hub for a virtual meetup space, conduct regular online meetings, and select platforms (Facebook group, Slack, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.) for sharing and connecting across the collective. (4) Conduct an ongoing process evaluation of collective formation,

CALIFA GROUP – PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL: The New Face of Library Makerspaces: The Long-Term Effects of Rapid Iteration

management, communication, and policies in order to share best practices that others can replicate. (5) Gradually expand the collective to include libraries from across the U.S., including school, military and tribal libraries. (6) Create avenues for members of the collective to learn from one another and share resources to strengthen the capacity to serve their audiences in new ways. (7) Refine the adaptable Toolkit created in the *Makers in the Library* project to reflect the new ways in which libraries are now engaging patrons in makerspace activities, including a volume focused on remote and virtual maker programming. (9) Share evaluation reports, lessons learned, and promising practices with library stakeholders and through conferences, blogs and publications.

Diversity Plan: Throughout this project, we will engage libraries that represent diverse communities throughout the U.S. to join the collective. We will pay particular attention to recruiting rural, tribal, military and other libraries that engage minority and underserved patrons through their work. Throughout the evaluation process, we will also pay particular attention to access issues around technology and economic equality.

Broad Impact: Findings from this project will generate best practices for developing, assessing, and sustaining maker activities in libraries and other educational institutions. The collective itself will serve as a model for organizations to work collaboratively to share and advance knowledge for themselves and the field at large. Opportunities for libraries to work around a shared common goal within a collective also demonstrates how to maximize limited resources, while providing opportunities for individual members to develop new skills through shared professional development.

Key Personnel and Partners: Paula MacKinnon, Executive Director of Califa, will serve as authorizing agent for the project. She will manage project finances and contractors and assist with recruitment and distribution of scholarships for leaders of the collective. Lisa Regalla, CEO of Regallium Consulting and former Project Director for the *Makers in the Library* project, will serve as Project Director of this initiative. She will manage the research into successful models, give input into the evaluation process, lead the design of the next volume of the toolkit and ensure that all aspects of the project are completed on time and on budget. Pamela Van Halsema, head of P Van Halsema Consulting, will serve as the Lead of the Collective and will manage the recruitment and development of processes that guide the expansion of this group. Scott Burg, Senior Research Principal at Rockman, et.al., will serve as the project evaluator and will conduct a process evaluation to help provide best practices for replicable models for formation of a collective. He will also provide support to members of the collective to evaluate impact locally. The Norman F. Feldheim Public Library and Corona Public Library will serve as leads for the collective. Both libraries were part of the *Makers in the Library* initiative and will contribute their knowledge and expertise to help form and manage the collective.

Estimated budget: The estimated budget for this project is \$240,400 over 2 years. This includes \$60,000 in Student Support for library leaders across the collective (6 libraries @ \$5,000/year for 2 yrs.); \$70,000 for the Project Director; \$50,000 for the Lead of the Collective; \$25,000 for independent evaluation; \$2,000 for technology platform costs for the digital hub for the collective; \$5,000 for consultants to provide professional development to the collective; \$10,000 for consultants to copy edit and design the new volume of the toolkit; \$2,000 in supplies and \$16,400 for indirect costs to Califa.