



LAURA BUSH 21st CENTURY LIBRARIAN PROGRAM

Sample Application RE-259050-OLS-25
Project Category: Community-Centered Implementation

City of Jacksonville, Florida (Jacksonville Public Library)

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$95,000

Jacksonville Public Library will create tailored Learning Paths to enhance supervisory and managerial skills and address the various needs of those overseeing both public-facing and support staff. The project will help resolve the challenge that many libraries are facing when trying to determine what type of professional development to provide for their leaders: too many choices and not enough data. The Library will evaluate existing leadership programs using training evaluation tools available through WebJunction, as well as key Leadership Program Outcome Indicators as identified by the Kellogg Foundation. This project will enable the Library to select (or create) and evaluate appropriate training for its managers. In addition to being beneficial to the Jacksonville Public Library, it will help other libraries facing similar challenges.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of completion

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

Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program – Community Implementation Grant – Pathways to Leadership Excellence

Introduction

The Jacksonville Public Library, which serves the diverse population of Duval County, Florida, is seeking support for a project that will develop a structured management training program. The Library serves more than a million people across 850 square miles through a large Main Library, 20 regional and neighborhood branches, a virtual service branch and a vibrant outreach program. Despite its size (400 front line employees and 83 supervisors), The Library currently lacks a formal leadership or management development program leading to inconsistent expectations and performance. To address this critical gap in leadership development and to help it navigate the vast array of training programs, the Library seeks to create tailored Learning Paths to enhance supervisory and managerial skills, addressing the diverse needs of those overseeing both public-facing and support staff. The Pathways to Leadership Excellence project will help resolve the challenge that many libraries are facing when trying to determine what type of professional development to provide to their leaders; the problem is too many choices and not enough data.

By securing \$95,000 in IMLS funds, The Library aims to evaluate existing leadership programs using training evaluation tools available through WebJunction, as well as key Leadership Program Outcome Indicators as identified by the Kellogg Foundation. The project aligns with the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (LB21) goal of enhancing the professional development of librarians. Specifically, it meets the LB21 objective of improving recruitment, retention, and diversity in the library workforce. This project will enable the Library to select (or create) and evaluate appropriate training for its managers. In addition to being beneficial to the Jacksonville Public Library, it will help other libraries facing the same challenges.

Project Justification

The Pathways to Leadership Excellence project addresses a leadership gap at the Jacksonville Public Library affecting leadership succession, staff retention, and the development and recruitment of capable managers. Like many libraries in the past five years, the Library has changed its service models, staffing models, and job requirements. The Library centralized several departments, redefined staff roles, and broadened prospective candidate pools by removing the MLIS educational requirement for supervisors. These changes highlight the need for competent, forward-thinking leaders, while also bringing to the forefront the need for professional development support for managers with varied educational backgrounds.

The Jacksonville Public Library has conducted several informal surveys of managerial comfort, skill, and competence. The Senior Manager for Organizational Development surveyed senior managers during personnel committee meetings to determine areas in which they noticed skills gaps in the supervisors they oversee. During supervisor meetings, existing supervisors were surveyed and shared a number of areas in which they felt they needed additional support or training. One of the most consistent questions asked by prospective new supervisors is the type of training and skill development they will receive. While candidates may be willing to take on the additional responsibilities, they are nervous at their perceived lack of structured learning provided by the Library. It has become clear that existing supervisors require additional training, and it is essential when recruiting new supervisors that they know there is a structured program to support their growth.

This issue is not unique to the Jacksonville Public Library. Discussions with other large urban library systems at the recent Urban Library Council (ULC) Forum indicate that many struggle with selecting effective leadership training programs and measuring their impact. The American Library Association (ALA) has hundreds of on demand webinars on leadership and management topics, as do several other learning platforms. It is clear that libraries are in search of meaningful management training. Additionally, through discussions with local library leaders during local consortium meetings, they appreciate the Management and Leadership trainings provided through the Northeast Florida Library Institute (NEFLIN) and the State Library of Florida. However, it is unclear whether these programs fully equip all supervisors for leadership success.

The Pathways to Leadership Excellence project aligns with the LB21 program, aiming to enhance library services by equipping professionals to lead diverse teams. As a way to address the identified needs, the Library developed a training class and a mentorship program and sent many staff to a range of management and leadership trainings (including those through NEFLIN and the State Library of Florida). Due to the variety and diversity of these efforts, the Library's leadership is left with questions about consistency, effectiveness and what future path the Library should chart forward.

There are several target groups for this project. The first two are internal to the Jacksonville Public Library. The primary group is existing supervisors. As mentioned above, the Library has over 80 supervisors, overseeing the work of over 400 staff members. It is critical that these supervisors are fully equipped to do their jobs confidently and competently. The secondary group consists of aspiring supervisors. A follow-up project during the development of this one has been to have a program for those interested in supervision with the library. We believe that communicating to these candidates that there are concrete supports in place for them if they promote will expand the applicant pool internally as we see an increase in their confidence in the Library as a place to grow professionally. The next target groups are external. Library customers will indirectly benefit through an improvement in the leadership of the Library. As supervisors and managers increase in their skill, their ability to strengthen their staff and create world class libraries will increase. The final target group is other library systems. The Library intends to share tools and findings with the existing local consortium, NEFLIN, and through ULC.

The ultimate beneficiaries of this project include existing library supervisors and managers who will receive structured training that improves their leadership effectiveness. These managers will benefit in a number of ways. First, they will be more successful in their current roles. The Library has heard from a lot of new supervisors that this is one of the biggest challenges in their career growth. Developing their skills will reduce the stress inherent in this position. The Library anticipates this will increase retention of library managers. Secondly, with an increase in skill will come an increase in opportunity. The Library aims to see more internal promotions into positions of increasing responsibility. Library staff will also benefit from this project, seeing improved communication, support, and professional development under well-trained managers. Finally, a Library presentation at the American Library Association's Annual Conference will communicate to the broader library profession the benefits of gaining access to research-driven insights into leadership training effectiveness.

The Pathways to Leadership Excellence project builds upon established leadership development frameworks. By applying the Kellogg Foundation's leadership program evaluation, the Library will ensure that the training pathways developed align with best practices in leadership development.

Project Work Plan

Jacksonville Public Library identified the need for this structured approach to management training and development but has not had the resources available to devote to this project. As such, a major component of the project is working with a consultant who will adapt existing resources and create the tools necessary for this to be successful. The first phase of this project will be the work of establishing the groundwork with the consultant. The rest of the project will be carried out in an additional four key phases.

Phase 1: Contract with Consultant (Month 1)

The project will begin by contracting with the consultant who will largely be responsible for developing and implementing the work of the other four phases. The Jacksonville Public Library is fortunate to have employed Devlyn Abbott in 2024. During this time, she was significantly involved with developing and implementing training for the bulk of the Library's staff as we migrated to a new integrated library system. Through the process, she became very familiar with the structure of the Jacksonville Public Library and was able to meet all of the managers. She has experience with developing and implementing management training in private industry and for the State of Florida. In early 2025, she resigned from the Library. She has agreed to consult as part of this project. The first month will be spent clarifying conditions and setting the scope of her work.

Phase 2: Needs Assessment (Months 2-7)

The project will begin with a needs assessment within the Library to identify specific gaps in leadership skills and areas in which additional training is most needed. This assessment will include surveys and interviews with staff and management to gather qualitative and quantitative data. The training evaluation tools assess whether training met the needs of both the individual supervisors and the organization. It will be important to gather a baseline of data to articulate those needs and to select or create training that addresses them.

The next stage of the project will be a comprehensive needs assessment to identify specific leadership skill gaps. Activities will include:

1. Development of Needs Assessment Tools (Months 2-3)
 - Design surveys and interview questions.
 - Create standardized evaluation rubrics for qualitative feedback.
 - Develop a competency framework based on best practices in library leadership.

Responsibility: Consultant (Lead), Manager for Staff Training (Oversight)

Resources Needed: Survey software, interview scheduling tools

This tool is the first of the digital products that will be created and shared as a result of this project.

2. Stakeholder Surveys & Interviews (Months 4-5)
 - Surveys with Senior Leaders to define organizational priorities for leadership competencies.
 - Surveys with Current Supervisors to identify self-reported gaps in leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities.

- Interviews with Staff & Managers to collect qualitative insights on supervisor effectiveness and areas for improvement.

Responsibility: Consultant (Lead), Senior Manager for Organizational Development (Survey Distribution, planning sections in supervisor meetings to discuss sections, make time for interviews)

Resources Needed: Survey platform (Microsoft Forms)

3. Analysis and Reporting of Findings (Months 6-7)

- Aggregate survey and interview data into themes.
- Compare results to established leadership competencies and industry benchmarks.
- Draft a report outlining key leadership gaps, training priorities, and recommendations.
- Present findings to senior leadership and Library stakeholders for feedback.

Responsibility: Consultant (Lead), Manager for Staff Training (Review), Senior Leadership (Input and Validation)

Resources Needed: Presentation software

This stage of the project will be evaluated by the successful creation of the needs assessment tool and the final report of findings.

Phase 3: Landscape Review and Evaluation (Months 8-12)

Once the needs assessment is complete, the next phase of the project will be to conduct a comprehensive landscape review to ensure that the leadership training strategy aligns with industry best practices and utilizes existing resources effectively. This phase will examine both internal and external training programs, focusing on content quality, delivery methods, and demonstrated outcomes.

Underpinning all parts of this phase will be the application of the Kellogg Evaluation Scan Framework. To ensure a structured approach, to evaluating existing leadership opportunities, the project will follow a locally customized version of the methodology used in the Kellogg Foundation's Evaluation Scan of 55 Leadership Programs. This involves:

- Analyzing the learning approaches used in various training programs (e.g., experiential learning, self-directed study, formal coursework).
- Examining the impacts and outcomes that have been measured in existing leadership programs.
- Identifying success factors and common barriers to effective leadership training.
- Comparing findings to organizational needs to inform program design.

The tool used to evaluate the trainings will be the second of the digital projects created and shared as part of this project.

Key activities during this phase include:

1. Audit of Internal Supervisor Training Resources (Month 8)

- Catalog all training materials, courses, workshops, and resources currently available to supervisors within the organization.
- Review participation rates and usage trends of existing internal programs.

- Identify gaps between current offerings and the leadership competencies identified in the needs assessment.

Responsibility: Consultant (Lead), Manager for Staff Training (Provide information on current trainings, including usage data)

Resources Needed: Training records

2. Evaluation of the Library's Current Training and Mentorship Program (Month 9)

- Use WebJunction's Evaluating Training: Why, What, and How tool to evaluate:
 - Alignment with identified leadership competencies
 - Impact on supervisor performance and engagement
 - Strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement
- Conduct interviews with past participants to gather qualitative feedback.
- Compare findings to the needs assessment results to identify priority areas for enhancement.

Responsibility: Manager for Staff Training (Lead), Consultant (Conduct Interviews)

Resources Needed: WebJunction evaluation tool, training data, participant feedback

3. Review of Existing Management Training Programs in Other Libraries (Month 10)

- Conduct benchmarking research on leadership training programs used by other libraries (public, academic, special libraries).
- Identify best practices and common challenges in library-specific leadership development.

Responsibility: Consultant (Lead), Manager for Staff Training (Review)

Resources Needed: Access to ULC, ALA, NEFLIN community forums, Zoom capability

4. Exploration of External Leadership Training Opportunities (Month 11)

- Identify leadership training programs offered by professional organizations, vendors, and academic institutions.
- Assess cost, accessibility, and relevance of external training options as compared to the needs assessment findings.
- Explore partnerships with established programs (e.g., Sunshine State Leadership Institute, NEFLIN Management Training Institute, university leadership courses).

Responsibility: Consultant (Lead), Manager for Staff Training (input on relevance)

Resources Needed: Vendor research, training program data

5. Analysis and Reporting of Findings (Month 12)

- Draft a report outlining the training options available through the Library, City of Jacksonville, consortiums, vendors, and academic institutions.

Responsibility: Consultant (Lead), Manager for Staff Training (Review)

Phase 4: Learning Pathways Development (Months 12-15)

Based on the findings of the needs assessment and the insights gathered from the landscape review and evaluation, the learning consultant will develop a management training pathway for all of the Library's managers, starting with those who are newest to supervision. The culmination of this project will be the

mapping of Library staff's needs onto existing training, refining internal training, or creating training to meet the gaps in available training. Library leadership anticipates creating pathways for both new and experienced supervisors. Activities during this time will include:

- Mapping training needs to existing programs.
- Recommending updates to existing training programs or modules.
- Recommending new training modules or mentorship enhancements
- Identifying potential partnerships for external training.
- Development of pre- and post-training assessment tools.

During this time, there will be regular check-ins between the consultant and the Manager for Staff Training so that the Library is prepared to implement pilot groups in the next phase. As recommendations for improvements to existing training are given, these improvements will be made.

Phase 5: Pilot (Months 16-18)

Prior to rolling out the leadership pathways in their entirety, the Library would like to pilot some of the improvements to existing internal trainings. A couple of the guiding principles of this project are to evaluate the effectiveness of training over time and monitor not only knowledge gain, but also skill mastery. The Library will:

- Pilot training approaches with a small group of supervisors.
- Evaluate effectiveness through pre- and post-training assessments.

After the delivery of this training, the Library will:

- Collect baseline data to compare pre- and post-training leadership competencies.
- Conduct skill assessments at multiple stages of training.
- Conduct a follow-up survey to gather qualitative feedback.
- Present findings at American Library Association's (ALA) Annual Conference 2026 in Chicago, IL.

The intent of this is to ensure that the trainings are effective and meet stated needs. Additionally, this is another place to gather input from the target group for this project. The Library hopes that the communication with them during the data gathering, needs assessment, as well as during the pilot of the program will help to increase their buy-in and therefore the overall effectiveness of these trainings.

Responsibility: Manager for Staff Training (conduct/ facilitate trainings) Consultant (guide analysis of data and assist with final reporting)

Resources Needed: ALA Annual Conference and travel fees

Project Results

The intended result of this project is to create learning pathways for library supervisors, directly addressing the management training gaps identified at Jacksonville Public Library. The project will be measured by key deliverables, such as the needs assessment, the evaluation of management trainings, and the creation of defined learning pathways. These deliverables will enable the Library to offer targeted professional development that improves leadership capacity and enhances staff retention.

Throughout this process, many tools have resources will have been created or adapted from existing models, including:

- Needs assessment tool
- Leadership Competencies Framework
- Training Evaluation Tool
- Report on existing leadership trainings available to library staff
- Tool for evaluating internal trainings

Additionally, the Library will improve existing training options and will have a limited amount of leadership curriculum.

While these tools will be used by the Jacksonville Public Library for our specific needs, they would be able to be used by other libraries and organizations. While some of the questions or specifics from such things as the needs assessment would need to be changed or adapted to ensure relevance to other institutions, they will set a framework that would be useful to the broader library community.

We intend to disseminate the project findings and tools in a number of ways, both internal to the Jacksonville Public Library and to the broader library community.

Internally – Senior Leadership

Upon receipt of the grant, we will dedicate time at a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting to review the project proposal in detail and outline how SLT members will participate.

Once the consultant is hired, they will meet with SLT to discuss their plans and interview members from the team.

After the needs assessment is completed, the consultant will present the findings and the related leadership competencies identified through the process. SLT will give input and will be responsible for validating the findings and approving next steps.

At the end of the pilot, the Manager for Staff Training will present a final report to SLT and describe how leadership training will be instituted moving forward. This group will be responsible for the approval of the plan.

Internally – Supervisors

Upon receipt of the grant, the Library will create a section during the monthly Leadership Roundtable (LRT) meeting to review the project in its entirety and discuss what supervisors can expect during the process. We will highlight the communication channels we will use (meetings, emails, surveys, interviews) and encourage supervisors to fully participate and give input and feedback throughout.

The Library will have a mid-project checkpoint during an LRT meeting to review progress, discuss findings to that point and review the rest of the process.

Prior to the pilot, the Library will identify supervisors who will participate and reach out to invite them to participate.

After the pilot, the Library will use the LRT meeting again to discuss how the project went, how the Library will utilize their input in the development of the tools, and how to proceed with leadership training in the future.

Externally

The Library will present at the local library consortium, NEFLIN. They have an annual meeting every September and the Library intends to propose a session on leadership training and, more broadly, how to assess what an organization's needs are relating to leadership. The Library also intends to submit this presentation to Florida State Library conferences and the American Library Association Annual Conference. Through this, we will highlight the tools created and ensure participants know where to access them.

References

American Library Association. (n.d.). Evaluating training: Why, what, and how. WebJunction. Retrieved September 19, 2024, from https://www.webjunction.org/documents/webjunction/Evaluating_Training_Why_What_and_How.html
Russon, Craig & Reinelt, Claire. (2004). The Results of an Evaluation Scan of 55 Leadership Development Programs. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. 10. 10.1177/107179190401000309.

PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

YEAR 1

AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL

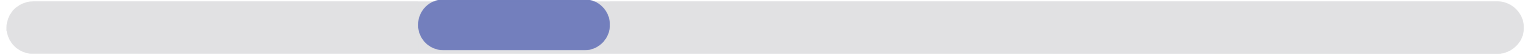
HIRE CONSULTANT



NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOL



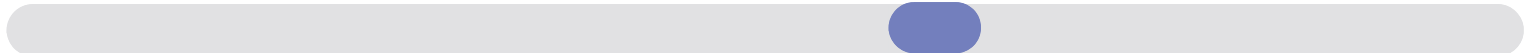
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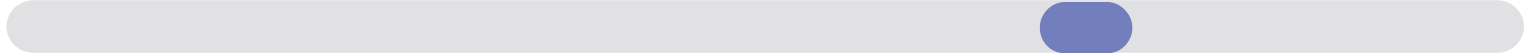
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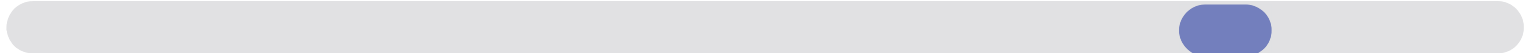
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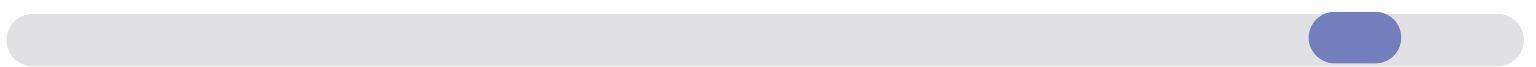
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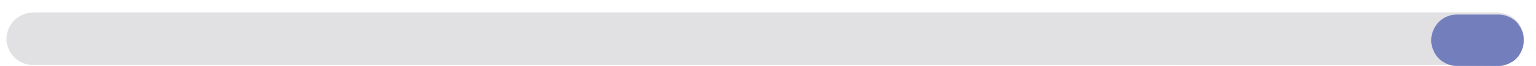
OTHER LIBRARY'S TRAINING



EXTERNAL LEADERSHIP



FINDINGS REPORT



PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

YEAR 2

