

EXCITE Your Library Community: Transforming Librarians

In order to cultivate the next generation of library leaders and to improve northeastern librarians' skills in leadership and community engagement, the Connecticut State Library (CSL) requests \$379,500 in grant funding, matched by \$380,000 from CSL and participants, to lead a two-year (Oct. 2017-Sept. 2019) team-based training program with partners Innovation Builders and the University of Connecticut that will teach collaboration and innovation skills, result in new grant funded programs and services that respond to community input and demonstrated needs, lead to cultural change at libraries, and sustain project impact through extended training. The curriculum was developed based on lessons learned and feedback from a full-scale pilot with teams from seven Connecticut public libraries from Oct. 2016 to Spring 2017.

National need: ALA's "Libraries Transform" public awareness campaign implies both that libraries transform the lives of patrons and that libraries are transforming as organizations with new services and ideas. Yet there are few solutions offered for how librarians can transform themselves by learning new skills and a mindset to encourage innovation and experimentation at their libraries. This project from CSL is well-suited to the IMLS Community Anchors grant category as it will fill this skills gap by teaching librarians practical tools for how to collaborate, how to engage with and develop a deeper understanding of their communities' needs, and how to design engaging programs to meet those needs. This future-oriented program offers 21st-century skills training not available in the region and offers greater promise for sustainable results than the short-term, individually-focused library leadership workshops in New England led by the New England Library Association and ACRL New England. This program complements IDEO's Design Thinking For Libraries toolkit, bringing it to life with hands-on training and adding skills in collaboration and entrepreneurship. Importantly, the program aligns with the work of the Aspen Institute by giving librarians tools to activate many of the concepts in the Institute's Action Guide around people, platform, and purpose. As noted by a pilot participant: "[This training] will help us provide services other than materials that our patrons really want or need, rather than guessing or hoping to get in on whatever trends come along."

Work plan: Dawn La Valle, Director, CSL Division of Library Development, will serve as project director with assistance from Gail Hurley and Maria Bernier, Library Development Consultants at CSL. CSL will contract with Jeanine Esposito from Innovation Builders (IB), an organization with experience guiding companies such as PepsiCo and United Health to innovate new products and services and transform ways of doing business. Ms. Esposito partnered with The Westport Library on several aspects of the 2013 IMLS grant "Makerspace 2.0: Retinking Libraries." She is leading the full-scale pilot of "EXCITE Transformation for Libraries" with CSL and using participant comments (<https://goo.gl/xKd6kv>) to test and refine the project design. Ms. Esposito and IB are uniquely qualified to translate their corporate experience to the library field.

CSL will offer multiple progressive, in-person training and coaching sessions led by IB for up to 120 participants from 24 public, academic, school, and special libraries. Cohorts, consisting of six teams of four people, will complete all three components of the Core Program. 1) Bootcamp: Teams receive three days of interactive training that provides the foundational language, behavior, tools, and process for transformation, including how and when to collaborate as a team, how to facilitate and engage the community through human-centered research for deeper insight, how to design transformative programs and services in response to community needs, and how to make those programs and services real. 2) Design and Transform: IB will coach the teams through a full cycle of applying these skills at their own libraries. After the Bootcamp, teams will conduct a series of public conversations to gain insights on the emotional and functional needs of their community members. Teams will regroup for five days of training to apply their insights to ideate and design a community-based, engaging, and participatory program or service for their libraries. Over the following two months, teams will carry out an iterative design process by facilitating feedback sessions with community members, stakeholders, and community partners and by refining the programs based on input. In the concluding two-day training, teams will finalize their program details and implementation plans and pitch their projects to a panel to receive small grants to kick start the new programs over the course of six months. 3) Coaching: IB will

conduct coaching calls and on-site library visits between training sessions to support the teams' field work and help them develop their ideas into practicable projects. IB will also provide six months of progress check-ins as teams implement the programs they developed, ensuring greater success. By applying their new skills to a practical task at a local level, participants will cement their knowledge and begin to transform their libraries to meet a community need. Implementing their programs will also require them to practice project management skills, including planning, financial reporting, timeline adherence, communication, and people management. CSL expects teams to seek out and learn from library initiatives similar to theirs and likewise to share their design and results with the profession through blogs, articles, websites, webinars, and conferences.

In addition, IB will repeat the Bootcamp portion of the Core Program (requested by 80% of pilot participants) for two groups of additional staff at participating libraries to help expand the impact of the training, strengthen an organizational culture of collaboration and innovation, and increase the probability of sustainable change. Similarly, small teams of school librarians will receive intensive two-day training focused on everyday innovation techniques they can implement in their schools to engage their communities of students.

CSL will help to further sustain ongoing project activities by recruiting 6-8 pilot and cohort participants for IB's Advanced Facilitator/Mentor Training where they will learn to facilitate Design Teams within their libraries and others in order to create additional transformative programs. Trainees will gain experience by working closely with professional facilitators and helping to co-facilitate the second cohort, with additional coaching and feedback from IB. 88% of pilot participants were interested in this next step.

Training	# Libns	# Days	Timing
Cohort 1	24	10	3 sessions Jan-May '18 + new program/service May-Nov '18
Facilitator	6-8	8	Multiple sessions Jun '18-Sep '19
Bootcamp 1	24	3	Jul '18
Cohort 2	24	10	3 sessions Sep '18-Feb '19 + new program/service Feb-Aug '19
Bootcamp 2	24	3	Apr '19
School librarians	24	2	Spring semester '19

Starting in Oct. 2017, CSL will recruit in northeast states (New England, NY, NJ, MD, DE) through professional associations, regional library conferences, and the 2017 COSLINE Futures conference. Teams from all types of libraries (urban and rural public, academic, school, and special) and career levels may apply through a competitive process. Teams will be expected to commit to all training dates when they apply, with seed grants awarded only to libraries that complete the training. Retention was not an issue in the pilot.

Goals/outcomes: Led by the University of Connecticut, a continuous and iterative evaluation will integrate input from early cohorts into the project design for later participants. *Goal 1:* Improve northeastern librarians' skills in leadership, innovation, collaboration, community engagement, and project management. *Outcomes:* Outcomes are expected to be similar to the pilot, in which 100% of participants agreed/strongly agreed that their skills increased and they are likely to apply what they learned. Evaluators will also measure cultural change at the participating libraries as shown through cross-department collaboration and the use of newly learned techniques in everyday settings. *Goal 2:* Enable teams to activate library space to engage community members to gather and collaborate on meaningful, relevant issues. *Outcomes:* Evaluators will assess impact through patron participation, partnerships, and patron benefits from implemented programs and services.

Budget: The grant budget of \$379,500 will be matched by \$380,000 from CSL and participating libraries. Grant funds will cover contractor fees to IB (\$284,500) for materials preparation, training, site visits, coaching, and additional follow-up; seed grants (\$1000 – \$4000 each, total \$60,000) to implement new programs/services; and professional evaluators from the University of Connecticut (\$35,000). Match funds will include personnel costs for project staff and participants, discounts on IB's fees, travel, supplies, and meeting space.