PLP Innovation and Technology Opportunity Grant Program

<u>Project Zenbooth: Opening Doors by Closing & Soundproofing Walls</u>

1. One paragraph project summary.

Designed in the early 1940s, the Oakland Public Library's Main Library lacks many elements that are common in modern libraries, especially private conference or group study rooms for patrons. Nonetheless, it is a thriving central branch, with experienced staff and loyal patrons. As we strive to expand services, we find there are multiple competing space requirements and needs. The building mixes the benefits of communal collaborative spaces with patrons' varying needs for privacy and working in quiet environments. To better support such varied use, one specific need is a private, soundproof space with computer and video equipment. We propose to create such a space through a drop-in "Zenbooth." Zenbooths are portable phone-booth like structures that can be assembled in an hour, disassembled in 30 minutes, moved around as needed, and are ADA compliant. The Main Library currently has had a video conference space that has been in place for more than a decade. This is heavily used by patrons who are hard of hearing to communicate with friends and family. Unfortunately, the space is not private – it is shared with an extended services computer with specialized software and screen enhancement capabilities. It is also not soundproofed, so conversations sometimes carry into the busy lobby of the library. The addition of a Zenbooth would not only support private conversations with video phones and Skype options for extended services patrons. It would also allow us to provide other innovative services, such as coordinated story times with incarcerated parents, online language learning practice, remote volunteer lawyer and social services consultations, and quiet spaces for private phone calls. As the library offers more connections to social service agencies, the need for a private space for program in-take and consultations is increasing. Furthermore, as an urban library in a rapidly densifying city, private spaces are scarce and coveted; adding this feature to the Main Library's offerings would benefit current and future patrons. Remote and co-working patrons need private spaces to converse and this reservable space would be a free option for such patrons.

2. Explain how this project fits with the library's strategic directions.

The Oakland Public Library created a three-year strategic plan for 2016-2019. One of the main goals of this plan is to "Improve our physical spaces". This project fits squarely within that goal, as it will provide a flexible, multi-use space within our dated Main building without major construction and with minimal interruptions in service delivery. Another one of the library's goals which will benefit from the Zenbooth project is to "reach more people where they are." We're particularly excited about the prospect of connecting patrons with family members who are incarcerated or living in other parts of the world. The technology to make these distances shrink exists, and we want to make it more easily accessible to our community.

3. A description of the proposed project including the population served and the demographics of that population.

The Zenbooth will be assembled at the Main Library, although it's not a permanent construction and could – if ever needed – be disassembled and transported elsewhere. We anticipate most users will be regular patrons at the Main Library, which serves all of Oakland but does attract many people who live in the surrounding neighborhood.

The Main Library also houses the system's largest collection of services and materials for persons with disabilities, making it a popular destination for many who are deaf or hard of hearing – patrons whom we especially hope to serve with the new Zenbooth. Current special offerings for patrons with disabilities include the Sorenson Videophone mentioned above, rollators (walkers), and an adaptive technology workstation that includes a sit-stand table, open source screen reader software, Kurzweil 1000 and 3000 reading machines, and Inspiration software.

The Oakland Public Library serves the diverse population of 443,029 in Oakland, Emeryville and Piedmont. According to 2016 U.S. Census estimates, the City of Oakland (420,005) is ethnically and culturally diverse (28% White, 26% Hispanic or Latino, 23% Black or African American, 16% Asian, 6% two or more races, and 1% other). In the neighborhood immediately surrounding the Main Library (in zip code 94612), 23% of residents have a disability. 31% of people living in this zip code are foreign-born, 40% speak a language other than English at home, and 30% live below the poverty level.

There is great need in Oakland – and this neighborhood in particular – for free access to video conferencing equipment and to provide a dedicated space for the Sorenson Video Phone system. We'd love to be able to enhance our current offerings, and to add the element of privacy to our patrons' conversations, with the addition of this Zenbooth.

4. Goals and objectives of the project.

The Zenbooth project will advance the Oakland Public Library's goals of improving our physical spaces and reaching people where they are by:

- Enhancing the current video conferencing services with the addition of soundproof walls.
- Using the enhanced space for new purposes, e.g. calls to social service agencies, talking or reading with incarcerated family members, and connecting patrons with family who live far away.

5. Project timeline (activities).

Activity	2017		2018					
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June
Execute preliminary purchasing paperwork	X							
Order a Zenbooth		X						
Install the Zenbooth and add it to computer reservation software. Update Sorenson systems as needed.				X				
Create and post promotional flyers for the Zenbooth – emphasizing its usefulness to disabled, incarcerated, and patrons with family and friends in other countries				X				
Monitor the number of hours the Zenbooth is used				X	X	X	X	X
Collect (voluntary) patron feedback on the Zenbooth				X	X	X	X	X
Evaluate and report on the success of the Zenbooth								X

6. Evaluation of the project.

As with many library offerings, it's not possible or desirable to track exactly how the Zenbooth is used except through the library's computer reservation software; we anticipate some walk-up use as well. But the library will collect statistics on the number of times it's accessed. It will – like our current videophone – be available to individual patrons for up to one hour per day. For the first four months after installation, we will ask patrons who use the Zenbooth to provide anonymous written feedback on its usefulness with custom comment cards. We will also encourage patrons to contribute testimonials to the library's online response form, at www.oaklandlibrary.org/stories. With the current setup offering absolutely no privacy or soundproofing, we anticipate that the response from patrons will be overwhelmingly positive.

7. Project budget.

The Zenbooth model that we plan to purchase is $15,349 including shipping and installation (see photo, attached.) We also plan to purchase a stool, and a laptop with videoconferencing capabilities, which we plan to request as a grant from the nonprofit Friends of the Oakland Public Library. We will move over our existing Sorenson Video Phone system to this new booth.

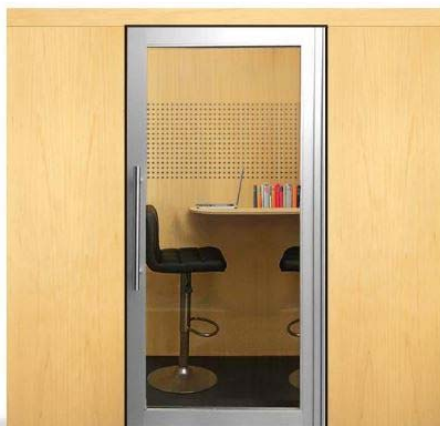| Item	Total Costs	PLP Grant	Other Funding Sources
Zenbooth, shipping, and installation	$ 15,349	15,000	$349
Laptop with video/sound input and output options	$800		$800
Totals	**$16,149**	**$15,000**	**$1,149**

8. Sustainability analysis.

The library anticipates few – if any – ongoing costs for the Zenbooth. Maintenance and software costs for the additional laptop and videoconferencing software will be included in the library's annual technology budget.

Additional: Photo of the Zenbooth