

**Pacific Library Partnership
Innovation and Technology Opportunity Grant Program**

Due Tuesday, December 10, 2013

Please provide the following information in a Microsoft Word document. Send the completed form to Linda Crowe, PLP Executive Director, 2471 Flores Street, San Mateo, CA 94403 or email crowe@plsinfo.org.

1. Title of Project Toy Lending Library

2. Library/Committee applying for funding Oakland Public Library
Name Nina Lindsay
Email nlindsay@oaklandlibrary.org
Mailing Address 125 14th Street, Oakland CA 94612

3. Amount of funding requested \$15,000

PLP Innovation and Technology Opportunity Grant Program

1. One paragraph project summary.

Oakland Public Library (OPL) will create a circulating collection of toys at several locations. The collection will focus on supporting the school readiness skills of 0-5 year old patrons, and engaging their parents and caregivers. The collection will build on the success of in-house-use toys already available in all library locations, and will be promoted through and integrated with the library's 0-5 programming. At selected pilot locations, furniture will be purchased to better display and promote the collections. Outreach materials will be developed that promote play as one of five early literacy components and encourage parents to come borrow toys from the library.

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

OPL's current strategic plan identifies six service priorities in light of severely constrained funding, one of which is a focus on services to youth to address the need for supporting academic success and literacy skills for lifelong learning.

School Readiness and Parent Engagement are current priorities of OPL, the City of Oakland, and our partners as part of the collaborative initiative [Oakland Reads 2020](#). Currently, OPL is in an unfunded consultancy and training-based partnership with First 5 Alameda County, initiated after receiving funds in FY11-13 to develop and enhance OPL's services to our 0-5 population and their caregivers. As a result, OPL now offers more developmentally appropriate storytimes for babies, for toddlers, and for preschoolers, following these storytimes with open parent-led play. The library provides toys and manipulatives for play in the library during these sessions. As well, toys are available by request, or in self-service cubbies, any time in the library. These activities together support the 5 literacy skills of the Every Child Ready to Read 2 curriculum (Talking, Singing, Reading, Writing, Playing), and the basic building blocks for school readiness identified by First 5 Alameda County (see their [Alameda County School Readiness Report](#))

Toy lending libraries in themselves are not newly "innovative"; the first toy library started in Los Angeles during the Depression. But they have generally stayed within the education and social services communities. In 2009, the Salinas Public Library adopted the toy lending library from a local adult school parent center. The Cuyahoga (OH) Public Library has a fully cataloged and visually browse-able toy lending library. For Oakland's community, there are no widely-available free toy lending programs. The Habitot Children's Museum in Berkeley offers toy lending to its members only, and the Children's Council of San Francisco lends toys by appointment only to San Francisco parents.

OPL has successfully run a Tool Lending Library since 2000, created in response to the Oakland Hills Firestorm and broadening our definition of the technologies we make available to meet our patrons' needs. Our in-house-use toy collections are in high-demand, and children often ask to take the materials home. Establishing a toy lending

library open to any registered OPL cardholder will strengthen our demonstrated commitment to parents to support them in their children's early learning needs. Toys, both traditional and innovative, are a technology that fits firmly within our mission to "delight, inspire, and inform" all of our community, regardless of age.

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

Pilot toy collections will be launched at four sites, geographically distributed throughout the city in low-income and high-need areas. The toys will be washable and non-breakable, and loaned as any other multi-part library item to any registered borrower in good standing without further application. They will be eligible for holds, and will circulate and accrue fines the same as children's books (3 weeks, renewable, no overdue fine; replacement fine only). They will check out in containers that can be integrated into the library's delivery system.

The collections will be displayed at their locations, and promoted onsite at those locations at storytimes, parenting workshops, and during the Summer Lunch program. Display furniture, where needed, will be purchased with PLP grant funds. The collections will also be promoted through OPL's existing social media (the Children's Services twice weekly blog post, Facebook, etc.), and through our existing outreach with teen parent programs, Headstart, First 5 Help Me Grow parent cafes, and WIC, SSA, and clinic waiting rooms. We will also promote it through our partners in Oakland Reads 2020.

A series of full color bookmarks with early literacy tips will be developed based on the Every Child Ready to Read 2 curriculum (Talking, Singing, Reading, Writing, Playing), and these will be given away during the described programs and outreach. They will be printed in three languages (Spanish, Chinese, and English) and used to help give parents tools for their child's school readiness skills, and to make the connection between library activities, books, toys, and other materials.

According to the [2011 School Readiness Report](#) from First 5 Alameda County (2013 not yet available), among children assessed for "proficiency their teachers felt they needed at kindergarten entry... 28% of students fell far below their teachers' expectations in the area of Self-Regulation." The skills in this area (for instance: Comforts self, Negotiates solutions, Plays cooperatively, Handles frustration well) can be well supported through play with toys. Additionally, the report cited a noticeable achievement gap in African American and Hispanic/Latino students, and in low-income families. The toy collections will be located in neighborhoods serving these high-need populations. After evaluating the four pilot collections, OPL will identify a sustainable budget for expanding and maintaining the collection, including targets within existing fundraising plans for Children's Services programming.

OPL serves the diverse population of 411,000 in Oakland, Emeryville, and Piedmont. The system comprises a Main Library, 16 neighborhood branch libraries (including two specialty-language branches, Asian and Cesar Chavez), an adult literacy program, and

the African-American Museum and Library at Oakland. Oakland's newest branch, the 81st Avenue Library, opened on January 29, 2011, and has fast become a hub of activity for the East Oakland community. OPL's mission is to "inform, inspire, and delight our diverse community as a resource for information, knowledge, and artistic and literary expression, providing the best in traditional services, new technologies, and innovative programs."

The City of Oakland is ethnically and culturally diverse (27.3% Black or African American, 25.9% White, 25.4% Hispanic or Latino, 16.7% Asian, 4.7% other). More than 28% of Oakland residents are foreign-born; 40% speak a language other than English at home; and 19% of residents (29% of those under 18 years old) live below the poverty level. Research shows that early reading proficiency is a primary indicator of a child's future academic success. In Oakland, according to the 2011 California State Test results, only 42% of Oakland public school third grade students read proficiently, compared with 53% of their peers in Alameda County.

Although the four pilot sites for this collection have not been finalized, they will all be in our highest-need areas, at locations where we operate free summer lunch. For example, our West Oakland Branch (tentatively identified as a pilot site) serves a population in which 70-78% of the students in the elementary schools continue to score below reading level on annual tests. (The comparable figure for the entire school district is 55%. Data source: 2010-2011 School Accountability Report Cards for Prescott, Hoover, Lafayette and Martin Luther King Elementary Schools published by the Oakland Unified School District.) Two-thirds of the students enrolled at the four schools are socioeconomically disadvantaged (meaning students qualify for free or reduced lunch program and/or neither parent has received a high school diploma.) The majority of the children are from families in the West Oakland Branch Library service area that have been classified as 77% African-American and 14% other ethnic minorities. Population figures from the City of Oakland (BAE, 2000) report that 73% of the households in West Oakland earn under \$35,000 per year or less than twice the federal poverty level.

4. The goals and objectives of the project.

Goal 1: Create a pilot toy lending library at four OPL locations.

Objective 1A: Identify, acquire, and process materials for four pilot collections. A workgroup will select materials based on in-house-use toy popularity and suggestions from staff at Salinas and Cuyahoga public libraries, as well as the Habitot Children's Museum in Berkeley.

Objective 1B: Promote the collection through programs at the four locations; and through outreach with partners working in high-need populations.

Objective 1C: Evaluate the pilot collections through circulation statistics and surveys.

Goal 2: Transition to a sustainable permanent toy collection.

Objective 2A: Following evaluation, create an expansion and sustainability plan for the collection, including identifying fundraising targets.

Objective 2B: Consider viability of a floating model for this collection, based on results of OPL's floating DVD collection (to launch early 2014).

Objective 2C: Plan to share model with other Bay Area and California libraries, through conference presentations and online.

5. The project timeline (activities).

Activity	2014											
	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Working group establishes collection guidelines, surveying other libraries and Habitot	X											
Working group selects and orders toys and materials	X	X										
Toys are received, cataloged, and processed			X	X								
Working group develops outreach materials			X	X								
Toy lending libraries are launched and promoted through programs, blog posts, and partners					X	X	X	X				
Survey of users						X			X			
Evaluate surveys and circulation; make plans for expansion											X	X
Consider program proposals for ALSC Institute and/or CLA							X					

6. The evaluation of the project.

At the conclusion of the grant period, the project will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the collection and its promotion, and where and how the collection should be expanded.

Based on the indicators for School Readiness reported by First 5 Alameda County ([School Readiness Report 2011](#) (2013 not yet available)), the toy lending library will be successful if parents who report using it also report that they “received more readiness information and engaged in more transition activities with their child.”

Circulation statistics (checkouts and loss rate) will also be used to evaluate the popularity of the collection.

Results will be shared with the PLP community, and OPL hopes to present preliminary program outcomes at the 2014 ALSC Institute and/or 2014 CLA conferences, both to be held in Oakland in the fall of 2014. If these deadlines prove too aggressive, we will look toward future presentations, but we want to consider the chance to present to an audience who would have the opportunity to examine the collection in person.

7. The project budget.

Item	PLP Grant	Local In-Kind	Total
OPL staff salaries (selection, promotion, cataloging, evaluation)		\$8,000	\$8,000
Toys and circulation containers (@ avg \$50 per toy and container)	\$13,000		\$13,000
Furniture for collection display	\$2,000		\$2,000
Outreach materials (bookmarks)		\$1,000	\$1,000
Sanitizing supplies		\$200	\$200
Totals	\$15,000	\$9,200	\$24,200