PLP Innovation and Technology Opportunity Grant Program Application

Library Name: Livermore Public Library

Project Title: Community Connections

Select category you are applying under:

- Category A: Innovation and Technology Opportunity Grant

☐ Category B: Grant Replication Program
   If Category B is selected, enter the name of the grant you are replicating:

1. Please provide a one paragraph project summary.

   The Community Connections initiative will allow Livermore Public Library (LPL) to purchase wi-fi hotspots, tablets, barcode scanners and laptop computers. This equipment will be used to support four critical LPL services: 1) LPL’s Literacy Program, 2) Career Online High School, 3) wi-fi hotspot circulation, and 4) community outreach. Rather than simply circulate hotspots and equipment, this program will divide equipment between the four service priorities articulated above. The devices and equipment will be made available at the Civic Center, Rincon, and Springtown branch libraries as well as community events to serve Livermore residents and the surrounding communities. Community Connections is LPL’s recognition that even within a relatively affluent community, there are those who do not have access to an internet connection, and that their need for this service should not be diminished or disregarded for any reason.

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

   The Community Connections project aligns with LPL’s three main strategic objectives of promoting “literacy in all forms,” affirming “equity and inclusion” and enabling “community members to participate and benefit from library services by increasing their awareness of and accessibility to these resources.” These goals are the central focus of LPL’s current Strategic Services Plan. The goal is to ensure the proposed equipment and devices benefit our community and staff, focusing on the most equitable distribution possible.
3. Please provide a detailed description of the proposed project including the population served and the demographics of that population.

Internet access is not an amenity or luxury. Internet access is essential to fully participate in school, apply for a job, file an insurance claim, or access social benefit programs as examples. Livermore is a relatively affluent suburb with relatively low rates of poverty. This fact unfortunately obscures the needs of low-income residents living in a community where internet access is by-in-large taken for granted. Community Connections is for residents caught in this gap. Our proposed initiative will provide free mobile wi-fi internet access to any person with an LPL library card. It will allow patrons in need of free internet to access it without having to demonstrate need by income verification or other measures required by local schools and state agencies. Funding Community Connections is recognition that even in an affluent community, there are many who cannot afford reliable internet access and therefore cannot fully participate in what their community has to offer them—including library services.

The Community Connections initiative will provide wireless internet access and devices to patrons in support of four distinct areas of LPL’s programs and services utilizing 20 wi-fi hotspots, 2 tablets, and 2 laptops. These service areas include LPL’s Literacy Program learners and tutors, Career Online High School students, community outreach events, and circulation to patrons who wish to borrow a wi-fi hotspot.

This initiative will prioritize the 6% of Livermore’s population lacking access to a home internet connection as well as the 4% documented as living below the poverty line. We also recognize that the Hispanic/Latinx and African American populations may be undercounted by as much as 5% and 3% respectively based on information provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. These two groups lead the documented rates of poverty by demographic in Livermore. Therefore, we believe the number of residents who could benefit from the Community Connections initiative may be substantially larger than what the 2020 Census estimates provide. We argue that there is likely more need than documented.

Staff has identified 31 sites in and around the City of Livermore that provide access to affordable housing for seniors, families, developmentally disabled adults, and people experiencing homelessness (approximately 980 total units of housing). Marketing and outreach will prioritize the residents of these locations. Grant funding will allow us to explore marketing options that include direct mailers, paid social media advertising, printing and distribution of flyers to businesses, homes, schools and more. The Community Connections initiative will also support hundreds of residents living in the unincorporated areas surrounding Livermore. Targeted marketing will be key in reaching these residents.
In addition, this project will connect with our Literacy Program’s approximately 50 tutors and 50 learners as well as students enrolled in LPL’s recently formed Career Online High School program. The goal is to grow both programs using the Community Connections initiative. Lastly, staff will continue promoting devices and equipment at local schools, city festivals, and special events in partnership with the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, the City of Livermore, the Livermore Area Recreation and Park District, and others. Library staff will solicit feedback from patrons and stakeholders, fostering respectful and equitable engagement with members of the community.

In sum, the Community Connections initiative will allow LPL to help fill the gaps in internet access among residents. It affirms the fact that internet access is essential for innumerable purposes. Finally, it is a recognition that even within an affluent suburb, there is and will continue to be a need for free internet access. For those community members, Community Connections is a small step toward promoting equity in online resources too often taken for granted.

4. What are the goals and objectives of the project?

We have four primary objectives for our Community Connections initiative:

Objective 1). Expand and enhance library services to underserved locations.

Having a wireless barcode scanner and wi-fi hotspot will enable staff to instantly register and issue library cards to patrons at community events, storytimes, library programs, etc. This will also enable staff to circulate materials off-site. The resulting capability lowers the bar to access and brings library services and materials out into the community, including to seniors, students, and families who are unable to visit the physical library locations. Staff will be able to conduct library services in the neighborhoods surrounding all three branches, ensuring we reach as many community members as possible.

Objective 2). Support LPL’s lifelong learning initiatives.

Funding will allow for the purchase of two tablets and two laptops, in addition to four dedicated wi-fi hotspots. This equipment will be offered to support tutors and learners who lack the equipment or internet connection to participate in either LPL’s Literacy program and/or Career Online High School. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, LPL has lost about 40% of the Literacy Program learners and tutors. Having the hotspots
and equipment is essential for rebuilding the program and bringing back vulnerable members of the community.

In addition, LPL has only recently begun participating in the Career Online High School program. The proposed equipment allows LPL to better support Career Online High School, providing internet and laptops to students unable to access them. Today, about 7% of our community is eligible to participate in the program. Again, this estimate does not include those potentially undercounted on the 2020 U.S. Census or those newly arrived residents living in short-term transitional housing in and around the community. The availability of devices and wi-fi-hotspots for these individuals will remove a substantial barrier to their participation in these library programs.

Most importantly, this initiative allows those who are unable to visit the physical library to participate fully in either program—therefore ensuring those patrons with limited resources may participate uninterrupted in LPL’s lifelong learning opportunities as our community continues to recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**Objective 3).** Introduce wi-fi hotspots into LPL’s circulating collection.

The remaining 15 Wi-Fi hotspots will be introduced into LPL’s circulating Library of Things collection. The hotspots will be divided between our three branches, serving the widest possible area. Grant funded marketing will allow LPL to get the word out into the community about Community Connections using flyers, direct mailers, social media and more. The marketing approach will be continuously reevaluated to ensure the most impactful distribution possible.

**Objective 4).** Sustaining and building upon the Community Connections initiative.

LPL staff will work to secure funding to renew service provider contracts (approximately $2,500 per year). In addition, budgets will include funding for the purchase of replacement equipment, as well as an expanded number of devices. The goal is to continue offering these services and constantly reevaluate to meet community needs as they arise. For example, during the pandemic local schools issued Chromebooks. However, access to free and subsidized internet was severely limited, mostly available through for-profit companies requiring income verification. Thus, a gap in the number of Chromebooks versus internet connections. LPL’s offering of 15 wi-fi hotspots will enable the library to support our local students. As LPL acquires more devices, we will continue to expand this type of support to students caught in this gap.

In sum, Community Connections is LPL’s commitment to offering free wireless internet so that community members may benefit not only from LPL’s digital services, but also engage in self-directed learning and personal growth in all forms not possible without an internet connection.
5. Please include your project timeline (include detail of activities).

**October 2022**: Grant Awarded

**November 2022 – December 2022**: Purchase equipment and devices, begin training staff on their usage and plan equitable roll out. Develop marketing campaign, design materials, and identify areas for mail and online distribution.

**January 2023 – February 2023**: Begin offering equipment to participants of Career Online High School program as well as Literacy Program tutors and learners. Start circulation of wi-fi hotspots at all three branches and designated outreach events. Roll out marketing campaign.

**March 2023 – June 2023**: Continually evaluate device circulation and usage. Gather feedback from patrons, outreach staff, and Career Online High School and Literacy coordinators. Seek immediate improvements when possible.

**July 2023 – December 2023**: Make ongoing adjustments. Secure funding for continued data service subscription. Replace materials and devices when needed or possible.

6. Please indicate how you will evaluate success of your project.

Success of the Community Connections initiative will be evaluated by seeking feedback from LPL staff, Literacy Program learners and tutors, and Career Online High School students. In addition, patron feedback will be sought at all three library branches, and at outreach events. Feedback will be collected using an anonymous form, available in online and paper formats. QR codes linking to the form will be adhered to the device cases. The form will be modeled in part on the Public Library Association’s “Performance Measurements” evaluation. The data will allow staff to adjust and develop new strategies for more equitable distribution of devices and equipment.
7. Please detail your project budget. (Note: Indirect costs are not allowed.)

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Qty.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost*</th>
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<td>Data Subscription</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$9,000.00</strong></td>
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* Costs based on estimates as of August 2022.

8. Please indicate how the project will be sustained after the grant term is over.

After the conclusion of the grant period, LPL will continue to budget for Mobile Citizen’s data subscription costs (about $2,500 per year). Funding will be written into LPL’s general budget. When possible, additional new and replacement equipment will be purchased. Staff will also continue to adjust the initiative based on feedback from patrons and Literacy and Career Online High School program coordinators. As new community needs are identified, staff will pivot outreach efforts to reach underserved areas of the community.