PLP Innovation and Technology Opportunity Grant Program Application

Library Name: Los Gatos Library

Project Title: Interactive Analog Family Spaces

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 Los Gatos Library intends to reimagine the use of the Children’s Room, removing digital interfaces and creating interactive analog spaces that support collaborative play, exploration, and interaction for children all ability types. After two years of pandemic-restricted living, we are finding that families are desperately trying to find environments that can disengage their young children from computer screens and digital devices while at the same time fostering unstructured social interaction, cooperation, and explorative learning in a free and safe environment.

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

The project meets four aspects of our Library’s 2022-2024 strategic plan:

Access, Equity, and Inclusivity: Creating spaces rooted in the research on the needs and sensibilities of families with differently-abled children provides an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

Library as Community Center: This project will rekindle our role as a “third-place” for families to meet, hang-out and interact, which builds friendships and connections between new families in the community.
Foster exploration and a love of learning: Giving children an option to explore and find joy in an analog environment fosters a sense of curiosity of the world outside of a screen.

Meeting Post-Pandemic Needs and Rebuilding: Rebuilding our clientele and increasing our patron use to obtain the numbers we had pre-pandemic necessitates changing our space to meet new demands from families for their children to digital detox and explore analog play in a communal environment.

3. Please provide a detailed description of the proposed project including the population served and the demographics of that population.

We will first relocate all computers and digital interactive stations out of the Children’s room and install them in other areas of the Library (Children that still require a computer will be able to check one out from our laptop vending machines and bring them into the Children’s room when needed). This will be followed by physically rearranging the layout of existing Children’s room shelving and furniture to create seven activity spaces, each focusing on a different aspect of exploration, interaction, learning style, or developmental need.

The spaces created will be:

Sensory Exploration Space – This space recognizes the need for play and exploration centered on tactile sensation and sensory stimulation. We will be installing a sequin wall that changes colors when brushed with hands and fingers to combine play with color and touch, as well as a marble wall therapy panel that consists of a large grid of multicolored marbles that form patterns of color while providing the sensory input of marbles rolling and turning over hands and fingers.

Garden of Sound – To be located outside in our Children’s Garden, the space recognizes the need for play and exploration based on sound and smell. We will be installing three pentatonic metal tongue drums in the shape of mushrooms made from recycled gas canisters. Using soft mallets, the resonate pentatonic instruments will allow children to explore sound and vibration individually or collaboratively.

Garden of Touch and Smell – To be located outside in the area between our garden and our adjacent mini-park, this space recognizes the need to explore and connect with nature through touch and smell. We will be replanting the garden area with child (and companion animal) friendly scratch-and-sniff plants that will range from plants with tactile sensations of fuzzy and soft to bumpy and prickly, and olfactory sensations from scented herbs and aromatic flowers. We will also be installing a water-conscious closed-loop play feature with child-sized hand pump and water flume to allow liquid sensory touch and play.
Building Big and Cooperative Play Space – This space recognizes the need for a contained space for high-energy, kinesthetically inclined children to explore building big with mega-size science-museum quality dense foam building blocks that encourage working collaboratively to build big and demolish safely.

Problem Solving Space – This space is geared towards creative problem solving and learning with tactile objects, wind, and gravity for those with a curious mind and developing attention span. We will repurpose two large metal sheets that served as the backing for shelving and powder coat them in colorful shades to create a foam-ball “marble run” using pieces of pipes and tubes as chutes attached to magnets that can be arranged and rearranged in different configurations. We will additionally install a small vertical fan-based wind tunnel where children can experiment with creating potentially aerodynamic objects from lightweight craft supplies and watch them float and fly in the airstream.

Cozy Safe Space – This space recognizes that cooperative and interactive play is well outside of the comfort range of some children. We will provide a space that is cozy, quiet, and with a sense of protected enclosure with pint-sized partitions to two corners of our Children’s room. Calming wall paint colors and large plush/beanbag animal-shaped seating will offer a feeling of quiet and safety away from the bustle of other interactive spaces.

Mom Needs a Break Space – This space recognizes that caregivers need a break from the feeling of needing to entertain their kids 24/7. We intend to small clear a central space in the Children’s room with strong visual sightlines to all our other play spaces and just put some nice chairs for caregivers to sit on for, like, fifteen minutes and breathe. We intend to make this area appropriately boring-looking from a kid’s point of view and be completely removed from any sign of a guilt-inducing parenting book.

Population served and demographics
Families of children aged 2-10 which comprise approximately 25% of Los Gatos Library card holders and account for 50% of library use. Families of children with a range of development needs, abilities and learning styles.

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

Objective one: Conscientious improvement toward creating a more inclusive, accessible, and interactive Children’s Room.
Objective two: Creating a community option for post-pandemic digitally-free space to explore.

5. Please include your project timeline (include detail of activities).

October -- Removal of computers and digital devices from the Children’s Room
October/November -- Rearrangement of existing shelving units to create interactive spaces
October/November -- Purchase and sourcing of equipment and supplies
November/December -- Deliveries received
December/January -- Installation of indoor spaces
February -- Removal of existing garden landscaping
March/April -- Installation of new plantings and garden space areas

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

We will incorporate feedback questions regarding the use of the new areas into our annual library satisfaction survey. Anecdotal stories will be solicited and collected at appropriate intervals from families using the Children’s room.

7. Please detail your project budget. (Note: Indirect costs are not allowed).

Sensory Exploration Space:
Sequin wall $350
Marble therapy wall $900

Garden of Sound:
Three metal tongue-drums $2100

Garden of Touch and Smell:
Water activity pump and flume set $1400
Planting removal $400
New planting $600

Building Big and Cooperative Play Space:
Giant dense foam architectural building blocks $2400

Problem Solving Space:
Powdercoat metal panels $300
Magnetic pipes, tubes and magnet wall supplies $450
Tabletop wind tunnel $400
Craft supply $600

Cozy Safe Space:
Movable partitions $400
Beanbag/plush animal shaped seating $500

Mom Needs a Break Space:
Sofas/Chairs $5000

Total: $15,800
Note – We have matching funding potential for costs above what could be funded by this grant. Should the requested $12,000 not be available, we will also be able to work with a smaller amount to complete some of the areas in stages.

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

Activity space supplies and equipment are single-time purchases and intended for multi-year use. General upkeep, maintenance, or replacement will be covered in the Library’s regular budget in future years.

**Complete Only for Category B Grants:**

9. Explain what grant was selected to replicate and why.

NA

10. If there are changes or enhancements to the original grant, including budgetary changes, please detail the changes and your rationale for making them.

NA