

Exercise #5 Sample Need Statement

LSTA Application (Outcomes Measures) Needs Section from Partnerships for Community Learning

PROJECT CONTEXT:

The goal of the project is to provide Californians with more “free-choice learning” opportunities (opportunities—not connected with formal education—that individuals seek either to educate themselves or express themselves culturally).

The project concept was determined as a response to expressed concerns of community leaders and library leaders both in interviews and recent reports emphasizing the need for learning as an invaluable coping skill in today’s complex society. At the same time that the need is so great for increased skills, recent statistics published in *Reading At Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*, a 2004 publication of the National Endowment for the Arts, show that essential skills and knowledge of all Americans are at risk due to declining participation in literary and arts activities.

The project focus is based in large part on the premise showcased in *The Urban Conference and Urban Libraries Council 2003 publication, Partnerships for Free Choice Learning: Public Libraries, Museums and Public Broadcasters Working Together*—that libraries need to

- 1) expand offerings to current users and/or broaden their appeal to reach new users and
- 2) foster creative opportunities for “free-choice learning” in their communities through partnerships with museums and public broadcasters.

Using the Chinese experience in California as a unifying theme and drawing on the special expertise of each of the grant partners, the project proposes a multi-day interactive, experiential training event, the *Partnerships for Learning Conference*, to be held April 8-10, 2006 at the Cerritos Library (coordinated by the clioinstitute). Attendees will participate in teams of 3-5 that include representatives from public libraries, museums and public broadcasting.

As a result of the training events, participating library staff will 1) strengthen their connections with museums and/or public broadcasters in their local communities, 2) learn how to develop and/or adapt innovative applications of interactive technology to reach/engage Californians in their search for “free-choice learning” opportunities, and 3) enhance their capabilities to provide existing and potential users with increased access to a broad spectrum of learning and cultural enrichment opportunities.

NEED STATEMENT

I. User-based need:

California residents need access to “free-choice learning” opportunities to gain skills and knowledge essential to maintain and/or improve the quality of their lives.

A. From the literature: Essential skills and knowledge of all Americans are at risk due to declining participation in literary and arts activities. The following sources underscore problems and why they are critical.

1. Reading At Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America, National Endowment for the Arts, 2004.

This report shows solid evidence of the declining importance of literature to all segments of the American population.

Dana Gioia, Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, writes in the preface: “Reading is not a timeless, universal capability. Advanced literacy is a specific intellectual skill and social habit that depends on a great many educational, cultural, and economic factors. As more Americans lose this capability, our nation becomes less informed, active, and independent-minded. These are not qualities that a free, innovative, or productive society can afford to lose.”

2. The 2002 Survey of Public Participation (SPPA) in the Arts, was conducted as a supplement to the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Study (CPS), which scientifically selects households to represent the socio-economic characteristics of the U.S. population. The Census Bureau also conducted arts participation surveys in 1982 and 1992. The 2002 SPPA data show that one of the most important factors in literary reading is participation in other arts activities. Art museum and performing arts attendance are significant factors in literature participation, even adjusting for education, ethnicity, race and other factors.

II. Participating libraries need:

California public libraries need to 1) expand offerings to current users and/or broaden their appeal to reach new users and 2) foster creative opportunities for “free-choice learning” in their communities through partnerships with museums and public broadcasters.

A. From the literature:

Partnerships for Free Choice Learning: Public Libraries, Museums and Public Broadcasters Working Together, The Urban Conference and Urban Libraries Council, 2003. This report resulted from a Conference for Museum and Library Services grant; it focuses on the need for libraries, museums and public broadcasters to meet the changing needs of the communities they serve. The following quotes are from the introduction.

“Libraries, museums, and public broadcasters face an extraordinary challenge in the coming century. A surge of new populations, languages, and cultures has placed added demands on the content and quality of the services these institutions provide.”

“Political, civic, and business leaders agree on the importance of continuing education to the life of the nation. Some have argued for a grand alliance of libraries, public television, museums, public radio, and elementary, secondary, and higher educational institutions across the country to further the nation's commitment to learning in all of its forms. This alliance, they say, would

organize support for policies, programs, and research to further the vision of a continuously learning citizenry, workforce, culture, and community. ”

B. From a survey of libraries:

An e-mail survey of team leaders who attended the 2002 (LSTA funded) Imagine it Conference was conducted in March 2005 to see if team participation in the conference had resulted in service improvements and if the proposed project would meet current needs.

They were asked two questions:

1. What has happened as a result of your team’s participation in the Imagine it Conference?
2. Would your library be interested in sending a team to the proposed conference and if so why?

Here are two selected responses from the survey.

Francisco Pinneli, Santa Maria Public Library

1. Our team has used their experiences at the Imagine It Conference to generate ideas and develop plans for new or increased services, especially for the new Main Library to be completed in 2007.

2. Specific to your grant proposal, there are several museums within walking distance to the Library and many collaborative opportunities. We’re referring to this corridor as the new “cultural center” for Santa Maria. For example, we currently have a “Books and Bones” program with the Natural History Museum across the street whereby classes can visit two venues and learn about the Central Coast’s fauna & flora. We hope to expand these programs in the new venue. The City also oversees the public access television studios and is always looking to expand content on the airwaves, esp. about City services. So, as is evident, what you're describing fits seamlessly into the objectives that we are involved in. Definitely we'd like to participate and learn from others' experiences. Why reinvent the wheel? Let's learn from each other.

Dianne Bish, Roseville Public Library

1. Our (new) Mayor continues to be a staunch supporter of our library, and initiated the City’s first “Roseville Reads: One Book, One Community” this past December (her first official act as Mayor at the December 1 City Council meeting!). She wants to see more enhancements of our library, and has pushed for the City’s entire website to be as spiffy as some of those library websites she viewed at the Imagine It! Conference, and that is happening. Our Director of Parks, Recreation & Libraries has visited Cerritos at least three times, encouraged others to do so (sometimes taking them with him), and refers to it in many ways, relating to both library and parks - the concept of “place,” the way it engages customers and visitors in such dynamic ways, etc. The Mayor has told other members of the City Council and the City Manager to visit Cerritos to imagine what could be adapted to Roseville. We’ve adapted some of the things we've learned at Cerritos (both at the conference and during other visits) here in Roseville. The ripples from this smooth pebble continue.

2. Definitely! Part of our recent online survey to citizens in Roseville and to library cardholders (yes, there’s a lot of overlap there, but think of the non-library-users who participated!) showed that collections for and services to children rate highly (especially homework centers), as does educational opportunities for everyone. Also, we will construct and build a new branch library in our westside regional park over the next year and a half, and this library will include a display

and hands-on education center for the Roseville Electric and Environmental Utilities Departments. The center will show and teach about our resources, conservation, environmental concerns and the like. We'll also have a studio where shows can be filmed for cablecasting, and plan on doing mini-documentaries on a variety of topics - both by library staff and/or by library customers and visitors to the education center. All of this seems to fit in with the theme of your proposed conference.

C. From key informant interviews:

Holly Hinman, Infopeople Director, who has taught grant writing courses in 2004 and 2005-online and onground-found that California library staff-consistently throughout the state-were lacking skills in identifying, designing and implementing collaborative community partnerships.