

TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: Libraries Transforming Communities Initiative Overview/Update

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:

For information purposes. No actions requested.

ACTION REQUESTED BY:

N/A

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BACKGROUND:

Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC) is an ALA initiative created to support library-led community engagement and innovation. Made possible through a \$1.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the goals for LTC are to develop and distribute convening and conversation facilitation training and learning resources that will build the practice of community engagement in library services, position libraries as innovative change makers, help the library profession to transform the ways it provides service to users, and ultimately benefit communities nationwide. This two-year ALA initiative is being managed by the Public Programs Office who has compiled the attached overview and update.

Attachments: LTC Board Doc Attachment

Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC)

- LTC is a library-led community engagement initiative based on the idea that public libraries are uniquely positioned to lead community innovation.
- The groundwork for Libraries Transforming Communities was laid during 2012-13, when, through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, ALA worked with the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation and a core group of library leaders to develop a framework for training consistent with ALA's overall engagement with the transformation and future of libraries. This project, "The Promise of Libraries Transforming Communities," was a presidential initiative of Maureen Sullivan (ALA president, 2012-13).
- The current phase continues the collaboration with the Harwood Institute and is funded by a \$1.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, awarded last fall.

Core methodology:

- LTC seeks to help the public library profession become more focused on and skilled at convening community conversations and more innovative in transforming internal practice to support fulfillment of community aspirations.
- Goals are to develop and distribute convening and conversation facilitation training and learning resources that will build the practice of community engagement in library services, position libraries as innovative change-makers, help the library profession transform the ways it provides service to users, and ultimately benefit communities nationwide.
- LTC uses the Harwood Institute practice of "turning outward," which emphasizes:
 - Changing our orientation from internal/institutional to external.
 - Taking steps to better understand our communities.
 - Changing processes and thinking to make conversations more community-focused.
 - Being proactive to community issues.
 - Putting community aspirations first.

Four components of initiative:

- I. LTC Public Innovators Cohort
 - Ten public libraries have been chosen to participate in an intensive team-based training opportunity.
 - Over 18 months, cohort librarians and their local teams will receive in-person training, webinars and coaching from Harwood educators as they work to apply the "turning outward" model in their own communities.

- More than 80 libraries applied; the 10 participating libraries will be announced later this month.
- II. Broad distribution of resources
- A series of four “Turning Outward to Lead Change in Your Community” sessions will be offered at the 2014 ALA Annual Conference. Similar sessions offered at PLA 2014 received high attendance (100-225 per session) and positive feedback. Additional sessions will be offered at subsequent ALA conferences.
 - An array of community engagement resources relevant to all types of libraries is freely available to all library professionals. These include digital downloads, conference programs and webinars, including those used by the cohort libraries in their training.
 - Board members are encouraged to attend sessions or access the tools at **ala.org/LTC**.
- III. Staff training
- Two ALA staff training sessions were held April 7 and 8; 50 staff members participated representing 22 ALA units.
 - The training goal is to adapt and apply the “turning outward” model within our own organization in the context of member service.
- IV. Communications
- Communications to the field and the public will build support, visibility and buy-in for the work of libraries as agents of community innovation and change.
 - Units collaborating to communicate are PLA, PIO and *American Libraries*.

Sustainable Outcomes

We expect that Libraries Transforming Communities will enable ALA to:

- Seek out and champion success stories of library-led community innovation with the long-term goal of shifting public discourse away from one about libraries in crisis and toward one of libraries as agents of positive community change.
- Share case studies of our cohort libraries — our first “turning outward ambassadors” to the library profession. Updates on their progress will be shared on a blog at **ala.org/LTC**.
- Make community engagement resources, relevant to all types of libraries, available to all library professionals for free download at **ala.org/LTC**.
- Support a community of practice for librarians to come together and share and advance these ideas through regular presentations, gatherings, and in the ALA Connect group “Libraries Foster Community Engagement.”