Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities Example 2

**Library Type:** Public Library (single branch)
**Population Size:** <4,999

**What did reviewers like about this application:** Applicant showed significant need, awareness of the service population, and a clear plan.

*Note that narrative answers below were slightly edited to anonymize the applicant.

**Community and Library Information**

**Describe your library and the community it serves, including demographics, dynamics, and key issues or challenges it faces. What should reviewers know about your library and community in order to understand your proposed project?**

The Public Library serves the City (pop. 873) and the smaller communities in County (pop. 3,394). 25.5% of the pop. is 65 years or older. 16.2% of the >65 pop lives with a disability. Our community demographics are White (86.6%); American Indian (5.7%); Hispanic/Latino (4.9%); and Black or African American (1.8%). The average per capita income is $24,945. 15.5% of residents live below the poverty level. In 2020, 67% of students were enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. Challenges faced by the city and County include a declining pool of community leaders, involving the disenfranchised, economic survival for all, and limited resources and community programming. The Library faces the particular challenge of being seen as relevant in today’s changing world.

The Public Library is led by a 7-member advisory board and offers the usual services of collections lending, children's programming, summer reading program, Book Clubs, access to interlibrary loan and reference services through the Library System, as well as printing, scanning, and computer services. The Library offers the only 24-7 free internet access in the community. There are 4 public-only outdated computer terminals and an additional three newer tablets. The Library is open year-round, six days a week for a total of 35 hours/week. It is staffed by one library director, one library assistant, and 2 volunteers. The Library’s audience includes all individuals regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, or physical and mental ability.

The Library operates in a 900 square-foot office space, severely limiting the Library’s collections and programming capacity. We have been fundraising to move to a new location but recently our current space was purchased forcing us to move sooner than we expected; thankfully, a building has been donated but it requires serious renovation.

**Primary Audience**

**Describe the primary audience for your project. Why did you choose to focus on this audience? How, if at all, do you currently serve this audience? What are your plans for outreach efforts to engage this audience throughout the project? What are your overarching goals for engaging this audience with your project?**

The primary audience for our project is our elderly library users and those living with physical disabilities. Our goal is to make the new library building ADA-compliant and accessible for our elderly library users and others in our community who are living with a physical disability, either temporarily or permanently. Our current library space is not convenient for this population, being in an older building that is not ADA-compliant. We do what we can with the space we have. Currently, we serve our elderly and disabled library users by delivering books to homes when requested; offering curbside services, large print materials, talking books, audio books; and we also host a monthly Tales and Travel Memories program at
our local elderly care facility. Our outreach efforts to engage this audience throughout the project include informal conversations and eventually a formal gathering to solicit their input. Our overarching goals for engaging this audience are to gather their input and support for a more spacious and ADA-compliant library. One library user who regularly has her books delivered by a library volunteer said the only thing keeping her from coming to the library herself is the step outside the main door. We hope that people who have been reluctant or unable to come to the library in the past due to their physical abilities will be able to come as a result of the renovated building.

Rationale

What challenge or opportunity does your project seek to address for the primary audience? How was it identified? Describe how you used relevant information from reliable sources to define the need, challenge, or opportunity you seek to address.

As previously mentioned, the current library space IS NOT ADA-compliant or easily accessible for all library users. The library staff identified the need to renovate the new library space as a result of experience with different library users and the realization that we are not accessible to some elderly or disabled members of our community. At this time, we have funds to do only basic renovations on the building; we appreciate this opportunity to apply for funds that will help us make the new space ADA-compliant and accessible to ALL community members, especially those living with disabilities. We look upon the necessity of moving to a larger space as an opportunity to improve our library collection and services. We informally observed our elderly library users as well as those living with disabilities and determined the following physical changes would make the new library space accessible and user-friendly for them:

1) automatic entrance doors
2) ADA-compliant bathrooms
3) repaired sidewalk and ADA-compliant ramp

Additionally, library staff is consulting with our local Independent Living Coordinator to ensure the new library space meets the needs of the people in her care. Library staff will also view a webcast tutorial called Positive Interactions: Making the Library a Welcoming and Empowering Place for People with Disabilities, the updated module of ASGCLA’s AccessAbility Academy.

Project Plan

Describe your preliminary plan for addressing the challenge or opportunity identified. What activities will you carry out to execute the plan? How has the input of the primary audience influenced this plan? How will the perspectives and input of the primary audience continue to be incorporated throughout the project? How will you share information about the project and its outcomes? Do you have any community partners in mind (existing or new) that you plan to engage in the process?

We are aware of some of the ways our current library is lacking in regard to accessibility, so we automatically plan to incorporate the following things into the renovations of our new library space:

1) widen and repair the sidewalk
2) install ADA-compliant 36” double doors at the entrance
3) remodel the bathroom doors and stalls to be ADA-compliant

To execute this plan we will 1) learn the standards for ADA-compliance by reviewing the State Library’s ADA Compliance Checklist; 2) work with the appropriate construction consultants to make sure our
We have yet to formally interact with the target audience regarding library renovations plans, but we know from informal interactions and observations that members of the target audience would appreciate specifically a walking ramp, automatic handicap doors, and bathrooms that are handicap accessible. We will regularly share information about the project and its outcomes by posting progress updates on our library Facebook page and in the local newspaper. We have a handful of community partners helping us with the project either through consultation, volunteer service, or donations. These community partners include the local Independent Living Office; the local elder care facility; and various local businesses.

**Budget Plan ($10,000 or $20,000) - $20,000**

Describe your plans for the grant funds. What will you use the funding to purchase or support? Please be specific (e.g. $10,000 will be spent on staff time to support the development and implementation of the project, $6,000 will be used to purchase and install an automatic door opener, $2,000 will be used as incentives for conversation participants). The total amount of this section should add up to $20,000.

We have cleaned out the new building and preliminary, basic renovations are underway. After securing the necessary funds, we will continue with renovations as follows:

- $6,500 to remodel the bathrooms to be ADA-compliant
- $12,100 to install 36” automatic double doors at the front entrance and a 36” automatic single door at the back entrance
- $1,400 to widen and repair the sidewalk

$20,000 total

**Budget Plan ($10,000 or $20,000) - $10,000**

Please describe what your plans for the funds would be at the $10,000 level. What will you use the funding to purchase or support? Please be specific (e.g. $5,000 will be spent on staff time to support the development and implementation of the project, $3,000 will be used to purchase and install an automatic door opener, $1,000 will be used as incentives for conversation participants). The total amount of this section should add up to $10,000.

- $6,500 remodel the bathroom doors and stalls to be ADA-compliant
- $3,500 install a single automatic 36” door at the back entrance

$10,000 total