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MORE THAN EVER.



Libraries Transforming Communities: Models for Change

Summative Report

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NewKnowledge is a non-profit research institute working to advance social justice so all people can live life to the fullest in harmony with a thriving biosphere.

Executive Summary

ALA has partnered with the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation to provide professional development activities and related resources to librarians working in diverse settings and library types over the past two years. The Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC): Models for Change initiative aimed to provide librarians with relevant and accessible opportunities to build skills and capacities that help them better understand and engage with their communities.

NewKnowledge conducted the LTC program evaluation from 2016 to 2018. Building on prior reports for this project, this summative report considers data from across three “Learning Series” – aimed at three different library audiences – and reviews findings from the summative evaluation phase.

Data from this project confirms that the various models introduced through the LTC: Models for Change trainings were well-received by participants, though trainees are at various stages of implementation. Central to all the models introduced, facilitation was identified as a particularly relevant and transferrable skill, and trainees reported that they intend to continue to apply what they learned at notably high rates. Trainees prioritized facilitation skills so much that they called for even more training in different styles and areas of facilitation.

Though they are committed to engaging in this work, many trainees are finding that application will require structural changes and a shift in culture within their library, which means that it will take time to see evidence of changes in practice. Trainees also noted that their LTC training aligns with other work in the field toward increased community engagement as a core purpose of libraries, which should help create conditions for momentum toward mainstreaming these practices over time.

Trainees and staff alike highlighted additional support needs and suggested tweaks that might make training content delivery and implementation more effective, and this feedback informs the recommendations outlined in the final section of the report. ALA now has a nuanced understanding of its constituents’ needs and implementation contexts. As a result, ALA is well positioned to use these ideas to continue to directly and indirectly advance this work by supporting libraries for long-term community engagement success in an evolving institutional landscape.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	ii	Supporting Communities of Practice	20
Introduction	1	Recommendations	21
This Report	2	Conclusion	21
Summary of Prior Evaluation Reports	2	References	22
Methods	3		
Description of Evaluation Plan & Activities	3	List of Tables	
Webinars & Workshops	4	Table 1. Participation rates across training activities.	4
Analysis	4	Table 2. Themes that capture Series 1, 2, and 3 participants' key takeaways from the webinars.	7
Part A Results: Learning Series Comparisons	6		
Participant Response Overview	6	List of Figures	
Webinars	6	Figure 1. Ratings of satisfaction and enrichment for professional development.	6
Workshops	6	Figure 2. Plans to share learning with colleagues.	8
Learning Trends	7	Figure 3. Reported confidence in using concepts and resources to implement a community engagement plan.	8
Sharing Learning with Colleagues	8	Figure 4. Agreement with colleagues for how to define and address needs in the community.	9
Confidence about Applying Learning	8	Figure 5. Level of agreement regarding support from internal stakeholders.	9
Alignment with Library Colleagues	8	Figure 6. Level of agreement regarding the likelihood of support from external stakeholders.	10
Internal & External Support	9	Figure 7. Extent to which respondents felt they were dialogue and deliberation leaders in their libraries and communities.	11
Part B Results: Summative Evaluation	11	Figure 8. Extent to which respondents felt they had applied training in their communities.	12
Achieving Desired Outcomes	11	Figure 9. Reported badge collection.	16
LTC Trainings: Participation & Feedback	11		
LTC Website Traffic	12		
Implementing New Practices	12		
Evidence of Changes in Practice	15		
Recognition Badges	16		
Additional Implementation Support Needs	16		
Reflections on a Community of Practice Model	16		
Key Staff Interviews	17		
Moving Forward	18		
Training Model Suggestions	19		
Discussion, Recommendations, & Conclusion	20		
Training & Developing Library Professionals	20		
Inclusive & Accessible Learning Opportunities	20		

Introduction

In 2014 and 2015, the American Library Association (ALA) pursued an ambitious goal of changing how libraries serve their communities through Libraries Transforming Communities, a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-funded initiative. For this two-year project, ALA partnered with the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation to explore and develop the “Turning Outward” approach in public libraries. This work demonstrated a path for investing in libraries as public service organizations with a focus on civic engagement.

New Knowledge Organization Ltd. (NewKnowledge) conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC) in 2016 and found that the cohort-learning model was effective for early adopters of the new practices (Flinner, Roberts, Norlander, Beharry, & Fraser, 2016). Furthermore, many members of staff at the 10 libraries that made up the LTC Public Innovators Cohort so deeply embraced the principles and practices of the project that they sparked both internal institutional change and community-wide shifts in how libraries are perceived.

To build upon and further solidify the successes of the LTC initiative, and in response to requests from the field for additional models of library-led community engagement and dialogue facilitation, ALA pursued further support to offer professional development training. Funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the current initiative – LTC: Models for Change – began in November 2016. The evaluation of this initiative was supported by the Public Library Association.

The goals of LTC: Models for Change were 1) to provide relevant and accessible opportunities for librarians to build needed skills and abilities that they will use to understand and forge stronger community relationships, and 2) to communicate opportunities and outcomes to the field to spread and support the practice. To achieve these goals, ALA led professional development activities and made related resources available over a two-year period from November 2016 through October 2018. A critical partner in this project

was the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD), a national network of innovators who bring together people across divides to tackle difficult challenges.

Whereas the original LTC project focused solely on the Harwood Institute approach in public libraries, LTC: Models for Change offered professional development opportunities for both public and academic libraries using a variety of dialogue and deliberation approaches. The project was implemented in three distinct phases known as Learning Series, each focused on a specific target audience:

- Series 1: Public libraries serving large, urban communities
- Series 2: Academic libraries
- Series 3: Public libraries serving small, mid-sized, and/or rural communities

Each Learning Series included three webinars and an in-person workshop that preceded the ALA Annual Conference 2017, ALA Midwinter Meeting 2018, or ALA Annual Conference 2018, depending on the Series. These workshops were open to everyone who completed all the webinars in that Series. Participation in webinars was tracked through a digital badging system, which was used to determine eligibility for the in-person workshop.

NewKnowledge was brought into this project following Series 1 data collection in July 2017 to conduct formative and summative evaluation across the three Learning Series. Structured according to the evaluation goals stated in the IMLS proposal narrative, this report explores whether:

- Participants’ **understanding** increased as a result of the training;
- Participants’ **interest** in the subject increased as a result of the training; and
- Participants were **confident** they can apply what they learned in the training.

Additionally, our comments in the Discussion section of this report are guided by three IMLS project performance goals identified for LTC: Models for Change:

1. To train and develop library professionals;
2. To develop and provide inclusive and accessible learning opportunities; and
3. To support communities of practice.

THIS REPORT

This summative report features two main sections. Part A considers data across the three Learning Series, and Part B reviews findings from the summative evaluation phase that occurred after the completion of all three Series. The report builds upon prior reports completed for this project.

Summary of Prior Evaluation Reports

Status Report (October 2017)

A Status Report (Norlander, Mason, & Danter, 2017) presented the results from an overview webinar about the LTC: Models for Change Learning Series and Series 1 training activities for public libraries serving large, urban communities. The training activities consisted of three webinars focused on specific dialogue and deliberation models, and an in-person workshop. NewKnowledge found that those training activities had increased participants' understanding, interest, and confidence, and that ALA had begun to provide valuable professional development through learning opportunities that are both inclusive and accessible for a wide range of participants. Evaluators made recommendations to help ALA continue to facilitate opportunities that cultivate a shared sense of purpose and dedication to the work of community engagement.

Series 2 Topline Reports (December 2017 & March 2018)

NewKnowledge wrote two short topline reports describing the Series 2 webinars, based on pre-/post-webinar survey data (Norlander, 2017), and the Series 2 in-person workshop (New Knowledge Organization Ltd., 2018), based on a researcher's observations of the session and participant pre-/post-workshop survey data. NewKnowledge found that the term "community" needs to be explicitly defined for academic library professionals and confirmed that many academic libraries remain unfamiliar with community engagement work. Findings highlighted the need for additional support beyond webinars. Recognizing that some of the LTC training participants are already key assets helping change the discourse about the role of academic libraries in community transformation, continued peer mentoring was suggested to augment training by professional trainers.

Series 3 Evaluation Check-in Calls (March-June 2018)

To ensure that iterative feedback could inform the project throughout Series 3 (as opposed to receiving a topline report at the close of the project), ALA was amenable to a shift in approach. For this final Series, NewKnowledge set up a series of "evaluation check-in calls" to discuss the data from each webinar and the in-person workshop. Talking through findings and recommendations over the phone turned out to be a very productive, and more immediate, strategy for using emerging data to inform project implementation.

Methods

DESCRIPTION OF EVALUATION PLAN & ACTIVITIES

All evaluation activities were included in an August 2017 evaluation plan.

Input metrics for the project included the following, as established by ALA at the outset of the project:

- 10 webinars (1 overview + 3 per Learning Series);
- 3 one-day preconference workshops (1 per Learning Series);
- Curricula for these learning opportunities;
- Curated resources; and
- 13-18 recognition badges.

Output metrics included the following:

- A projected 850 registrants;
- The number/percentage of recognition badges claimed;
- Percentage of participants who indicated their understanding, interest or confidence was increased by the training; and
- The number of resource site visits and downloads.

As stipulated in the IMLS grant proposal narrative, summative evaluation was based on the following **outcome indicators**:

- The number/percentage of participants who indicated they have applied the learning in their communities;
- The number/percentage of participants who indicated they have engaged with collaborating organizations for further work;
- The increase in membership or participation in communities of practice by training participants; and
- Evidence of changes in practice six months after training.

Data collection methods included online surveys, qualitative interviews, in person pre-and post-surveys, observations, staff interviews, and a coordinated series of critical case studies.

The pre- and post-training surveys were modeled on the instruments used in the original LTC project, as these existing evaluation tools have proven appropriate and useful

for assessment of training effectiveness. Survey instruments were modified from their original form to measure specific points of interest related to the distinct dialogue and deliberation models.

All webinar data collection was conducted by ALA's Public Programs Office (PPO) and results sent to NewKnowledge for analysis.

Workshop data collection for Series 1 was conducted by ALA PPO and sent to NewKnowledge to analyze and include in the Status Report. For Series 2 and 3, a NewKnowledge researcher attended the workshop in person to observe and help facilitate survey data collection.

During the summative phase, evaluators engaged in three additional data collection efforts to further probe findings to date and measure results against research goals. The first activity was a follow-up email survey sent to all training participants who had consented to being contacted. This helped us measure longitudinal results in behavior change and community impact, which are not possible to measure with immediate post-training surveys. The second effort was a series of 10 critical case studies built on in-depth qualitative interviews across a range of libraries and one library organization, providing a "snapshot" of their current status in their approach to implementing the LTC training. The final data collection effort was a series of four key staff interviews that provided insight into findings – and might also inform strategies to support libraries for long-term success.

The ten interviewees who participated in the case studies came from diverse geographic settings and community and library types (three urban, one academic, four rural, and one larger system with branches primarily in rural areas). The final interviewee represented a non-profit, member-driven organization that seeks to facilitate resource-sharing and collaborations with other organizations to benefit regional libraries.

WEBINARS & WORKSHOPS

An introductory overview webinar led by ALA and NCDD staff in February 2017 explored the overall landscape of dialogue and deliberation processes, helped participants from all library types and sizes navigate the range of approaches available to them, and guided librarians in selecting the Learning Series that best fit their circumstances and resources. Participants had the option to attend this webinar live or view a recording at their convenience.

Three Series 1 webinars (aimed at public libraries serving large, urban communities) were held between March and May 2017, each covering a different engagement model in depth: Introduction to Dialogue & Deliberation, World Café, and Everyday Democracy.¹ For those who completed all three webinars and registered for an available spot, an in-person training at the 2017 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago, IL focused on Everyday Democracy's Dialogue to Change model.

Three Series 2 webinars (aimed at academic libraries) were held between September and November 2017. One webinar focused on NCDD providing an introduction to Dialogue & Deliberation, as had been the case in Series 1, with modifications for an academic librarian audience. The other two models introduced were new (Essential Partners and National Issues Forum).

Webinars for Series 3 (aimed at libraries serving small, mid-sized, and/or rural communities) were held between February

and May 2018. The first presented another modified version of NCDD's introductory webinar and the others introduced new models for engagement (i.e., Future Search and Conversation Café).

All webinars were free for participants. The introduced models were selected jointly by project leadership, according to the specific needs they anticipated for each distinct library population.

ANALYSIS

For interviews of case study participants and key staff, the researcher took detailed notes and reviewed those notes for prominent themes and representative quotes. The description of qualitative analysis was then returned to interviewees for review and to check for accuracy. Qualitative findings provided further insight into survey data and help evaluators understand how well LTC met its goals. Since qualitative data analysis is an iterative process, we returned repeatedly to the raw data throughout the research process. As conclusions took shape, revisiting the data helped us surface additional points of interest and provided the foundation for useful recommendations.

Quantitative data came primarily from webinar and workshop surveys from all three of the series, as well as the summative evaluation survey of series participants. Most questions were rating scale items, for which we used descriptive statistics (i.e., means and percentages) to describe overall responses. For the webinar and workshop surveys, we separated

Table 1. Participation rates across training activities.

	Live Attendance	Recorded Views
Overview Webinar	404	2,124
Combined Attendance, Series 1 Webinars	415	1,254
Series 1 Workshop	98	N/A
Combined Attendance, Series 2 Webinars	287	610
Series 2 Workshop	36	N/A
Combined Attendance, Series 3 Webinars	504	776
Series 3 Workshop	50	N/A

¹ In-depth descriptions of each model can be found at www.ala.org/tools/librariestransform/libraries-transforming-communities/dialogue-deliberation-resources.

responses by series. For the summative survey, we divided the participants into two groups based on their self-reports of engagement: those who participated in the trainings only virtually, and those who participated in the trainings both virtually and in person. This allowed us to see differences between the two types of participation.

In this report, all ratings were on a 5-point scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree*, to 5 = *Strongly agree*. To show patterns, we provide means in explanations of the data, where possible. In addition, we include figures to show distribution of responses to provide a more intuitive impression of variability in the data, as opposed to providing statistics only in text. To make figures more legible, *Agree* and *Strongly agree* are combined, and the same is true for *Strongly disagree* and *Disagree*.

Part A Results: Learning Series Comparisons

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE OVERVIEW

Webinars

Levels of satisfaction with the online learning sessions were very high across all three Learning Series, with little differences between them (Figure 1); a large majority of respondents selected *Agree* or *Strongly Agree*. Respondents were also asked to what degree they felt the session enriched their professional development. Again, rankings were very high and there were very few differences between the three Series (Figure 1).

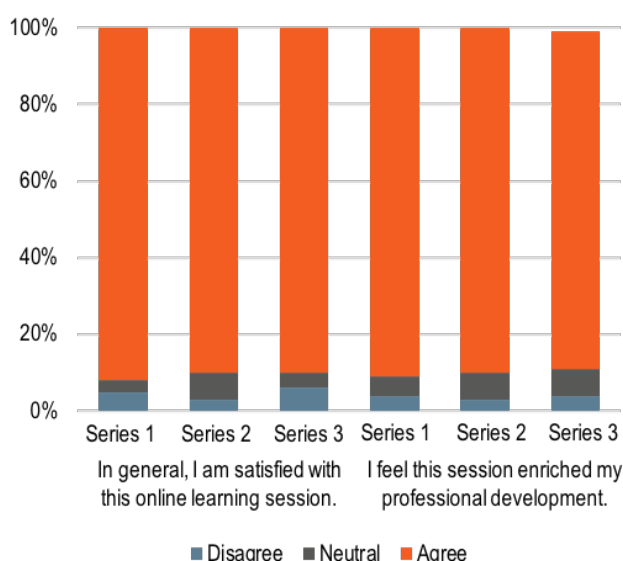


Figure 1. Ratings of satisfaction and enrichment for professional development.

Notes. For the question about satisfaction $n = 187$ for Series 1, $n = 96$ for Series 2, $n = 270$ for Series 3. For the question about enrichment $n = 186$ for Series 1, $n = 96$ for Series 2, $n = 270$ for Series 3. *Agree* includes both *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* and *Disagree* includes both *Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree*.

Workshops

Following each Series 1 webinar, respondents expressed a strong desire for continued involvement. Interest in the in-person preconference training was exceptionally high, with the 50 available spots filling up within minutes. To respond to this unanticipated level of demand, ALA authorized an additional 50 seats. By the time of the workshop, there were 135 people on the waitlist. On the day of the training, 17 registrants were unable to attend but 15 from the waitlist were present to take their place, so the workshop had 98 total participants. Overall, participants reflected positively on the quality of the training experience.

Academic library participants expressed less interest in the Series 2 in-person training. At the same time participation was affected by weather, as a handful of people who had registered for the workshop had to cancel at the last minute on account of flight cancellations. The workshop brought together 36 participants representing a range of academic campuses, geographic areas, community types, population sizes, and library roles. While not all libraries represented were academic – as had been the original intent – the contribution of those working in different library types (public, school, and special) reported beneficial learning outcomes. Conversations across library types focused on the potential for collaboration on a shared goal of fostering deliberation.

Series 3 brought together 50 participants at the in-person workshop, almost all of whom currently work at small or rural libraries. Given limited financial resources and staffing constraints, this level of participation would not have been possible without scholarships provided by IMLS as part of the grant. ALA reviewed 40 applications and awarded 25 \$800 stipends (to help with travel, lodging and meals) to libraries, based both on need and relevance to current or planned work. To help enhance the professional development opportunity, ALA provided stipend recipients with free exhibits-only passes, and a highly discounted full conference registration rate of \$100.

Overall, participants were very happy with how the workshops went. Sixty-three Series 1 participants reported on their overall thoughts about the training, and over half rated it *Excellent* (57%), while almost the entire remainder rated it *Good* (41%). Of the 32 Series 2 participants who indicated the degree to which they were satisfied with the workshop, over three quarters selected *Strongly Agree* and the remainder selected *Agree*.

LEARNING TRENDS

Training participants reported increases in knowledge and skills. Following each Series 1 webinar, survey-takers were asked to name two things they learned in the session. Survey-takers for Series 2 and 3 webinars were asked to identify something they learned and how they plan to apply it to their work. Open-ended responses for all Series were reviewed for prominent themes (Table 1).

Table 2. Themes that capture Series 1, 2, and 3 participants' key takeaways from the webinars.

Response Trends
<i>Series 1</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods for community engagement (choosing topics they care about, etc.) • Access to new resources and tools (websites, democratic tools, examples of success stories, etc.) • A better understanding of concepts (equity and equality, dialogue and deliberation, etc.) • Prioritizing relationship building • The importance of setting the tone • A process for organizing this work
<i>Series 2</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific techniques for effective, inclusive and thoughtful discussions (structuring and framing questions, specific words to use and not use, communicating about difficult topics, etc.) • How to collaborate with others (local organizations, different departments, groups on campus, etc.) • Access to new resources and tools (online engagement tool and essential partners platform) • Better understanding of concepts (dialogue, debate, deliberation, etc.) • Methods to engage the community (creating a safe space, doing needs assessments, community building techniques, etc.)
<i>Series 3</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques for implementing conversation cafés (using a neutral location, listening to the community to address their needs, etc.) • Strategies for identifying local relationships and community partners • Access to new resources and tools (materials to support facilitation)

SHARING LEARNING WITH COLLEAGUES

Intention to share learning with others was one indicator of participant interest in the training models. Across all Learning Series, 83% of respondents either answered *Strongly Agree* or *Agree* when asked if they plan to share what they learned from the session with their colleagues. Participants in Series 1, compared to Series 2 and 3, were even more likely to plan on sharing what they learned with their colleagues ($M = 4.14$, Figure 2).

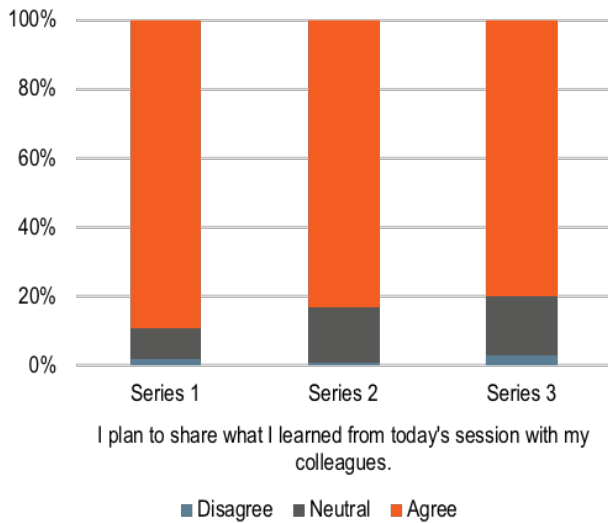


Figure 2. Plans to share learning with colleagues.

Note. $n = 177$ for Series 1, $n = 88$ for Series 2, $n = 249$ for Series 3.

CONFIDENCE ABOUT APPLYING LEARNING

Participants reported that confidence in being able to apply new community engagement strategies depends largely on 1) feeling alignment and shared vision with one's coworkers, and 2) feeling supported by internal and external stakeholders. Participants reported feeling confident after their participation in the training, and there were very small differences between learning Series (Figure 3).

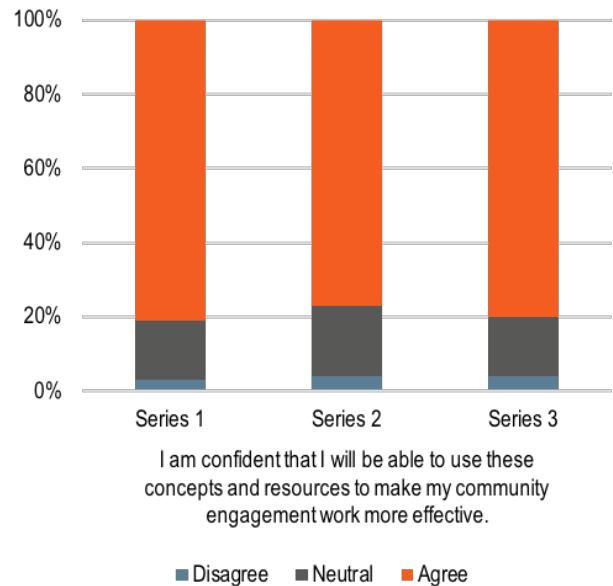


Figure 3. Reported confidence in using concepts and resources to implement a community engagement plan.

Note. $n = 186$ for Series 1, $n = 96$ for Series 2, $n = 270$ for Series 3.

Alignment with Library Colleagues

As mentioned, the research suggests that without convergence around shared purpose between colleagues, it feels and becomes impossible to do the heavy lifting required for true community transformation. Our findings were more nuanced; while respondents in Series 3 agreed with their colleagues more consistently (60%) than respondents in Series 1 and 2, many other Series 3 respondents felt neutral about the topic (Figure 4).

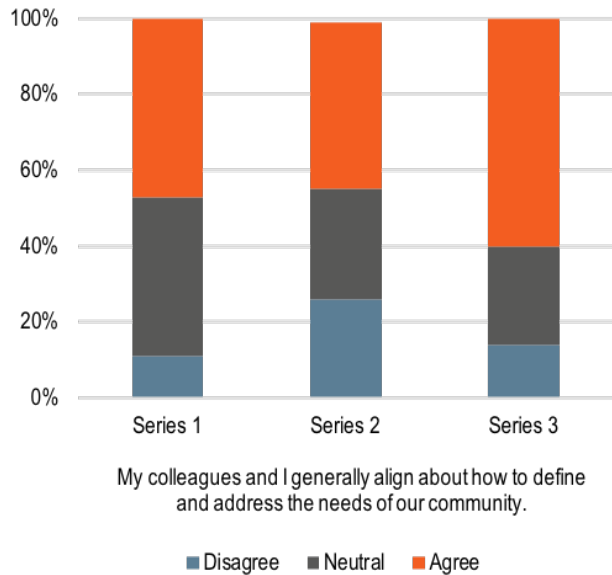


Figure 4. Agreement with colleagues for how to define and address needs in the community.

Note. $n = 223$ for Series 1, $n = 314$ for Series 2, $n = 407$ for Series 3.

Internal & External Support

The other crucial factor participants associated with the eventual success of a community engagement endeavor is whether library decision makers and the community itself support the library's efforts. Participants were optimistic about their colleagues and organizations' leaders getting behind their work. They felt that their colleagues were slightly more supportive than senior leadership, but in both cases more than half of respondents *Agreed* or *Strongly Agreed* that they perceived this internal support (Figure 5).

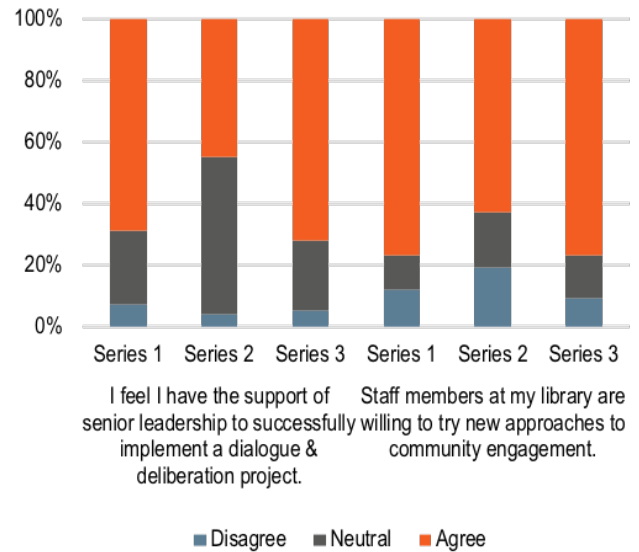


Figure 5. Level of agreement regarding support from internal stakeholders.

Note. For the question about having the support of senior leadership $n = 184$ for Series 1, $n = 95$ for Series 2, $n = 269$ for Series 3. For the question about staff members being willing to try new approaches $n = 223$ for Series 1, $n = 314$ for Series 2, $n = 407$ for Series 3.

Overall, participants were less confident about external support than internal support (Figure 6), but in all Series about half or more of the respondents agreed that they will have the support of external stakeholders.

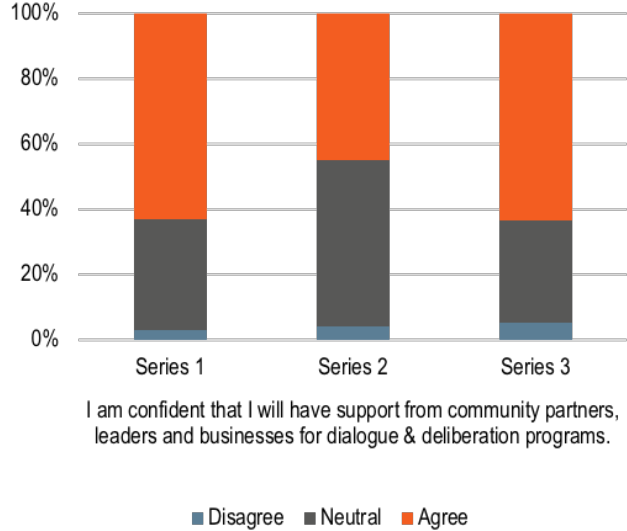


Figure 6. Level of agreement regarding the likelihood of support from external stakeholders.

Note. *n* = 186 for Series 1, *n* = 94 for Series 2, *n* = 270 for Series 3.

Part B Results: Summative Evaluation

ACHIEVING DESIRED OUTCOMES

LTC Trainings: Participation & Feedback

ALA projected in the grant proposal that the LTC training offerings would generate 850 registrants. The actual number of registrants across the three Series was 1,915.

The total number of times webinar training events across Learning Series were accessed – excluding the Overview Webinar, was 8,846. This number represents the number of live participants plus recorded views. The actual number of trainees, though, is fewer than that number because some people participated live and then watched the recording again later, and many others watched multiple webinars. While we cannot be certain of exactly how many individuals received training, the number far exceeded ALA’s expectations.

To analyze summative survey data, participants were split into two groups: those who participated in virtual trainings only (either live or recorded webinars), and those who participated in both virtual and (at least one) in-person training. We compared these two groups to ascertain differences in outcomes attributable to varying levels of training – especially because the in-person training provided “hands-on” opportunities to practice. We do, however, recognize that a library’s ability to have staff participate in in-person training may not be an accurate proxy for the institution’s interest, motivation, or commitment, given constraints such as staff availability and travel expenses.

Participants who were limited to virtual training experiences felt much more ambivalent about their ability to act as leaders in their libraries and communities (Figure 7). Yet both groups felt they would need additional support to implement what they’d learned, with over half of both groups (61%) indicating *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* with the statement *I need additional training to be able to facilitate dialogue and deliberation*.

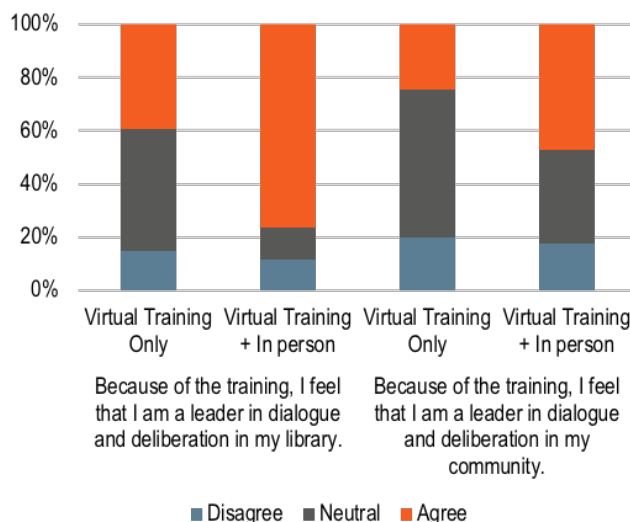


Figure 7. Extent to which respondents felt they were dialogue and deliberation leaders in their libraries and communities.

Note. $n = 61$ for virtual training only and $n = 31$ for virtual + in-person training.

Both groups also felt similarly moderate about institutional changes that have happened as a result of the training this early on; 39% of the virtual training only and 41% of the virtual + in-person training respondents agreed that their library’s strategic planning has been influenced by their participation, and 25% of the virtual training only and 32% of the virtual + in-person training respondents agreed that public perception of their library has changed as a result of their participation.

Case study interview data suggests that trainee experiences with the LTC models were very positive, especially the in-person trainings. Participants noted that the models felt appropriate, like they had been designed for use in libraries. One trainee stated, “To boost libraries to the next stage of being change agents ... it all resonated with me immediately, it’s a ready-made handbook.”

In some cases, trainees said they had known the theory but not how to put it into practice. Several mentioned that they had learned concrete skills such as how to do outreach that is inclusive, getting library patrons to engage in dialogue, and other matters of practice that had previously been “foreign.” The training provided language and structure that made doing the work seem feasible and approachable, particularly because the work was situated as being exploratory by nature, without a prescribed topic.

Many participants who participated in interviews described webinars alone as insufficient; one told us, “it’s just something I’ve done, and I put it away.” The style of the webinars was described as “not very interactive” by one interviewee, who noted the webinars presented new ideas by having one person talk about the method. Multiple interviewees felt that they lacked the follow-up they needed after the webinars, which did not clearly provide an opportunity to check-in or sustain engagement to support uptake.

For those who had the chance, practicing a model conversation was impactful. Getting to practice and role play, for example, a worst-case scenario about how to deal with difficult patrons during a dialogue “was ridiculous and we laughed, but it was effective,” according to one interviewee.

For some trainees who received a travel stipend to attend, it was their first experience of an ALA conference, and they reported finding it inspiring. Several specifically expressed gratitude to ALA for their support of small and rural libraries.

LTC Website Traffic

From the start of the initiative (November 1, 2016) until the date of analysis (October 15, 2018), the LTC website (ala.org/LTC) and subpages received a total of 39,996 page views, 32,559 of which were unique visitors. For pages dedicated to each of the three LTC audiences, training resources for small and rural libraries received the most traffic (4,255 page views), followed by large/urban libraries (2,375), and academic libraries (1,698). However, visitors to the academic training webpage spent, on average, 4 minutes and 41 seconds, versus 3 minutes and 10 seconds spent by visitors to the small/rural training webpage, and 2 minutes 39 seconds for the large/urban training webpage.

Resources – including webinar slides and lists of related resources from webinars and workshops – were downloaded from the LTC website more than 8,000 times from November 2016 to October 2018.

During this period, the most downloaded resources were from Phase 1 of LTC, which featured resources from the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. The most downloaded item was the LTC Getting Started workbook, with 1,745 downloads.

Of the resources from LTC: Models for Change, the most downloaded item was the slide deck from the webinar, “Libraries Transforming Communities: Models for Change Overview,” with 607 downloads.

Implementing New Practices

Participants are applying what they learned from LTC training in their communities, and results indicate that level of engagement in the training impacts application. Of the virtual training only respondents, 59% reported *Agree* or *Strongly Disagree* regarding their own application of what they learned during training (overall $M = 3.57$), while 83% of the virtual + in-person training respondents reported that they had already applied their training (overall $M = 3.94$) (Figure 8).

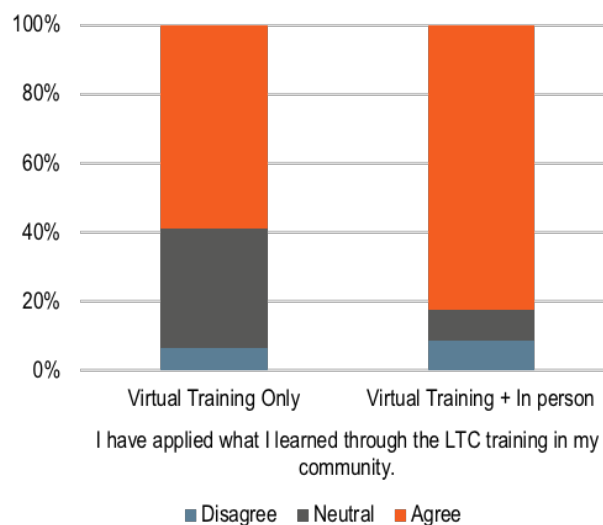


Figure 8. Extent to which respondents felt they had applied training in their communities.

Note. $n = 61$ for virtual training only and $n = 31$ for virtual + in-person training.

Virtual training only respondents ($M = 3.64$) and virtual + in-person training respondents ($M = 3.67$) reported similarly regarding the extent to which participants had taken steps to engage collaborating organizations. We note that many such collaborative relationships are still likely to be in the initial or early phases of development.

Likelihood of continuing to apply what they had learned during training was notably high in both groups, with 85% of the virtual training only group selecting *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* and almost all (94%) of the virtual training + in-person training group indicating their agreement.

The Current Range of Implementation

One approach that seems to have been widely feasible is integrating the various model formats into existing programs. Participants reported finding it easiest to layer these new approaches on top of what is already being done (e.g., incorporating the Conversation Café model as a new format for a regularly occurring book club) because this layered approach doesn't require buy-in or scheduling approval for additional programming. It is possible that this approach was popular among participants because LTC leaders specifically identified book clubs as appropriate for starting community conversations.

One interviewee who was a member of the original LTC cohort reported that their library had already seen applied learnings lead to tangible benefits at the community level. Recognizing their ability to address concerns about food scarcity being expressed in community conversations, the staff at this library began promoting awareness of food pantry options, started a summer and after-school feeding program for children, and initiated a produce-swap event. Following these efforts, nothing was said about food scarcity in the most recent round of conversations in that community, suggesting the need had been met.

One library took a systematic approach by having staff members complete the Series 1 webinars (roughly 30 people across 21 branches). They then hosted practice sessions to allow trainees the chance to try out what they were learning

and increase feelings of ownership. Some staff members began mentoring other staff and the library implemented a "community engagement checklist" to help keep everyone on track. As has often been the case since the first LTC initiative, the library adjusted the training they received to better suit their particular context and needs. Here, the original format developed by the library followed a format of 1) determining issues of importance to the community, 2) hosting dialogue and deliberation about those issues; and then 3) pursuing tangible action that addresses the issues however best determined by the community.

Trainees have also begun to train others. One presented Conversation Café at their state library association, where the 21 attendees learned about and got to try out the model for themselves. The same librarian is planning to conduct a similar future training at the state humanities council. In another case, an interviewee spoke about conducting widespread training in World Café in libraries across the Northeast.

Some of the case study interviews focused more on future aspiration rather than current implementation, especially since the Series 3 training finished shortly before summative data collection. In some cases, libraries plan programs months in advance and it can be difficult to add new programs to the schedule. Even when they reported being unable to implement dialogue and deliberation, respondents described using the training methods internally, often as a meeting format. Beyond helping staff – who are at different points in their awareness, interest in, and support of this work – learn about new ideas and practices, interviewees felt internal application of the training methods gives staff opportunities to see the model at work and try using it before using these tools in the community. This approach appears to be working particularly well in an academic library setting, where meeting facilitation is often desired.

Specific LTC Models: Affordances & Differences

Webinar content often had relevance for libraries that were not part of a particular Series' target audience. Ultimately, the data suggest that what tends to happen after libraries engage in this work over time might be best understood as the amalgamation of various tools; library staff adopt the parts

that feel relevant and work for them, combining those approaches with others or tweaking them slightly to achieve situational relevance.

One librarian who had extensive knowledge of the range of LTC models – including the Harwood Institute approach – described them in a somewhat linear fashion, from models that are easy to implement to those that require a lot of dedicated time and work. They noted that if the models were presented in this way, perhaps libraries could choose different tools based on their needs and where they are in their progress along this spectrum.

There seems to be a primary distinction between models that are topic-agnostic (e.g., World Café, Conversation Café) and models deemed to have more of a social justice agenda and action or change as the desired outcome (e.g., Everyday Democracy). A few interviewees noted that they recognized the work was important but did not feel the social justice-oriented models were as useful for them because their library had not yet built the capacities needed for implementation.

More libraries were using **Conversation Café** or had concrete plans to do so than any other LTC model. This model was perceived to have the easiest point of entry because it is *“just about community and people getting to know each other in a safe space,”* according to one participant, so the conversation topic need not be complex or controversial. Interviewees affirmed that such experiences set the foundation for subsequent conversations, building relationships and trust and giving participants the chance to articulate and initiate problem-solving dialogue about what’s important to them. This framework positions libraries to build new programs according to actual local needs and priorities, rather than what a library assumes it should do, which can be a powerful way to build a case and rationale for a new initiative or collaboration opportunity.

World Café, a portable model that can be done outside library contexts and is suitable for large numbers of people, was already being used by one academic library – even though this model was not profiled in Series 2. The trainee who initiated adoption was drawn to the World Café approach because it was *“low stakes for people, very inviting, very humane, but you can extract a lot of very deep information.”*

This individual described the value of focusing on one topic with a free-flowing, drawn-out pace, noting that making art / rotating is a very dynamic process.

Most interviewees who were familiar with **Future Search** concluded that it was too complex, particularly because it requires getting decision-makers in a room together for multiple days. *“There’s no way I could ever pull that off”* was a common reaction. Yet one academic library interviewee was optimistic about the possibility of using this strategy at a later stage of the work, after establishing a solid foundation, and is sending a staff member to a Future Search training.

One case study library is currently using **Everyday Democracy**, following a lengthy period of planning and logistical work. Feedback has been *“phenomenal,”* according to a trainee involved in implementation. This interviewee noted that the deep connections facilitated by this model ultimately enabled and led to a lot of outreach to people who didn’t know the library, which was facilitated by partner organizations’ willingness to spread the word. The interviewee described the first conversation as *“a watershed moment”* because attendees were very receptive, emotionally engaged, and had a real desire to do this deep work. This library was surprised to discover that these attendees were not regular library users as well. Beyond continuing to host conversations within the walls of this library, the plan is to bring Everyday Democracy engagement model to churches, a community center, and a middle school in different areas of the community to draw an increasingly expanded and diverse crowd of participants.

The Importance of Administrative Support

The importance of administrative support for creating the right institutional culture, a key implementation goal, had emerged as a roadblock for some interviewees. Even if specific models seemed to fit an institution, trainees reported that institutional and colleague support was not guaranteed. Library staff were afraid of having their already heavy work load added to, so trainees needed to build awareness that the shift they advocate is about *“looking at the community differently”* – not adding to the number of hours worked.

Several interviewees spoke about the challenge of feeling isolated in their desire to implement what they’d learned,

typically due to nervousness about what could potentially result. They spoke about a desire to be “brave” but also felt that certain topics that are most needed (e.g., anti-racism) are volatile and sensed that the leadership “*didn’t want to rock the boat.*” Interviewees reported fears about “*starting a fire*” with inflammatory issues that can result in labels for the library like “*rogue*” and “*subversive.*”

Those who had not yet hosted a dialogue were hopeful that the experience would demonstrate the value of the LTC model being used. One remarked, “*Support from the administration seems to be cooling somewhat, especially if there is any potential for the process to put the library into a position of fanning conflict. We need our first event to prove that these are valuable tools.*”

The limitations of institutional culture were particularly poignant for small libraries. Interviewees from these contexts noted that they really needed director-level buy-in to move forward with the work. Indeed, at most libraries the work of dialogue and deliberation doesn’t come with additional funding or resources, and numerous interviewees described how challenging it was to shift everyday practice or suggest changes to the status quo if the library director wasn’t receptive to the idea. One reported having an aloof director who doesn’t do check-ins or engage staff in dialogue, so the internal culture conflicts with the dialogic practices the trainee wants to implement.

Even in libraries with supportive leaders, there were sometimes challenges working through an institutional culture that doesn’t foster teamwork or give staff autonomy, a situation described by one trainee as “*demoralizing.*”

Change in administrative culture can be an opportunity. One interviewee’s supervisor had just retired, disrupting the *status quo* “*culture of no*” and very hierarchical system that had been obstacles to growth. Interviewees were optimistic that new leadership or new hires would share the vision and help advance implementation.

With respect to how training helped shift participants’ professional direction and/or expanded their capacities, one librarian noted that LTC training helped them transition into a new position and “*kick-start this new chapter in my career.*” Several trainees noted that the skills they learned are

transferrable; facilitation was identified as a particularly useful skill that can be applied in many situations for a variety of reasons.

Evidence of Changes in Practice

It can be difficult to discern exactly which changes in practice can be attributed to this initiative versus other community engagement efforts, because many libraries had related efforts underway during the same period. However, this situation reflects positive trends in the landscape and can ultimately be viewed as a more integrated – and ultimately more sustainable – transformation than if libraries had only worked on community engagement through LTC alone. One interviewee stated, “*Feels like a big wave to me, the whole idea of libraries transforming ... a move toward community conversations, it all fits together but I’m not sure how I got here.*”

As examples of the larger fabric of intersecting efforts, interviewees described other roundtable or discussion events that were not explicitly linked to the dialogue and deliberation models introduced in this grant. Some libraries had staff who were previously trained by the Harwood Institute and were using the community conversation model. Those libraries had often adapted the Harwood tools for their needs or were doing something loosely like but not exactly Harwood Community Conversations.

Importantly, though, interviewees tended to agree that this work is core to the purpose of libraries, even though they were at varying stages of implementation. “*The library is the place we have a responsibility to bring people together for conversation and create a safe space where people listen to each other,*” one said. Others described these practices as an expression of what they believe libraries should do; one specified, “*I’ve always wondered why libraries aren’t doing more! It’s the perfect platform, libraries have social capital and trust.*” Others described how satisfying it is to connect resources and other local organizations to address community problems, becoming a unifying force for solving a problem or reaching a community goal.

Recognition Badges

The overall number of digital badges collected was 648. It was a requirement to collect all three recognition badges to qualify for workshop attendance, but the cumulative Series badges were not required for any reason and interest was low; only 12, 10, and 8 cumulative Series badges were collected across the three respective Series.

Of the 108 respondents to the summative survey, 39 individuals indicated that they collected a digital badge related to their participation. Approximately half of respondents ($n = 56$) responded *No*, and 13 said they were *Not Sure* if they received a badge (Figure 9).

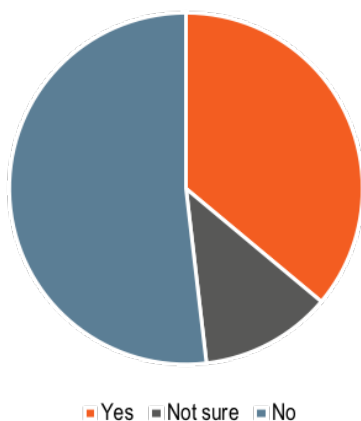


Figure 9. Reported badge collection.

Note. $N = 108$

When asked if they found the badge useful (e.g., for documenting attendance or demonstrating learning) only 18 of 52 respondents responded *Yes*, and only 6 of the 52 planned to cite it on a CV or LinkedIn profile.

Additional Implementation Support Needs

Basic facilitation was described as a cross-cutting skill that is needed for all models. Even after training, numerous interviewees described being nervous about the process and envisioning a poor outcome. Several went straight to the “*what do I do if...?*” line of thinking, acknowledging that lack of confidence was preventing them from getting started.

Another consistently described obstacles to implementation related to outreach basics: getting people to show up at all,

and getting diverse groups to come, rather than “*singing to the choir.*” Interviewees did recognize that library events tend to attract a self-selective group of participants; one noted, “*Our patronage is a limited group and if we want to get out of who always comes, partnership is crucial.*” There appeared to be a pattern of demand for additional guidance related to outreach fundamentals.

Another theme in the case studies related to developing the skills to work internally. Some trainees were not sure about how to best approach and communicate with leadership. More support in this area might better situate trainees to present the work in a way that demonstrates its value.

Some interviewees at earlier stages in the process were hoping for a better way to decide which model to use; they felt uncertain about whether their topic should be open-ended or specific, and whether action should be a desired outcome.

With respect to the distinct challenges faced by small and rural libraries, the data suggest that trainees in these contexts want to be out in the community but need to continue performing regular duties that keep them within the library, having few colleagues to partner with for coverage. The reality is that the libraries that have taken this work the furthest have often pursued additional paid training, beyond what was provided in LTC. For example, some libraries have hired professional trainers associated with the model being used. One library secured grant funding to continue working closely with Everyday Democracy trainers to learn additional facilitation techniques and build coalitions. Another has begun an 8-week course with an expert in World Café. Trainees from small and rural libraries, on the other hand, reported that they need strategies for doing this work despite resource constraints.

Reflections on a Community of Practice Model

The project team initially imagined that participants in the LTC initiative could eventually become a self-sustaining community of practice (CoP), or a learning partnership between people who find it useful to work together on a specific topic (Wenger, Trayner, & de Laat, 2011). The evaluation team reviewed the LTC datasets for potential interest in and need for a sustained CoP that could last beyond the funding. Trainees reported mixed feedback

regarding the idea of a CoP, though their understanding of the CoP concept was lacking; in particular, trainees seemed to conflate CoP with social network platforms and assigned administrative duties.

Case studies showed that trainees spoke about the benefit of feeling a “*sense of solidarity*” from knowing others with similar interests and concerns. Interviewees described how this feeling helps – even if those likeminded folks are in other libraries. One remarked, “*It’s very inspirational. I felt discouraged, like I was the only person carrying this [effort] ... [now] there’s solidarity that wasn’t sensed before.*”

When asked about the idea of forming a CoP around libraries’ community engagement work, only one interviewee was in clear support of the idea and willing to co-administrate. Most interviewees were measured in their response to the idea and echoed the sentiments of one interviewee, who mused, “*I’m interested, but it’s one of those things where I already spend a lot of time looking at a computer screen already...Do I have time for another thing?*” Many spoke about groups they were already involved with, often local and loosely related to social justice, though regional / state / national library networks or associations like the Association for Rural and Small Libraries were also mentioned. In one case, a large library system created their own CoP internally across branches, but noted that it was still helpful to portray the initiative as part of a larger ALA priority.

Survey participants likewise did not indicate interest in helping to establish or lead a Facebook group dedicated to dialogue and deliberation efforts in libraries. This was true for those who had attended an in-person training (87% selected *Neutral* or *Disagree*) as well as those who had only done virtual training (89% selected *Neutral* or *Disagree*).

Interviewees shared a range of ideas about what they might hope to get out of a CoP, but most preferred either a group focused very specifically on (1) one of the models, or (2) a regional network to idea-share about what was working in nearby locations that could serve as a test case, or coordinate programming with nearby libraries to improve communication and avoid competing for attendees in sparsely populated areas. Based on the findings about institutional barriers, the evaluation team observed that a CoP could

provide instrumental and emotional support for such challenges.

Regarding level of involvement interviewees envisioned for participating in a CoP, responses again varied. Some interviewees imagined participating as a *consumer*, a passive user who would look at it sometimes and occasionally participate. Some imagined participating as a *contributor*, focusing on local action and accomplishment-sharing, with few or no administrative responsibilities but with occasional thought leader participation. We note that in any CoP, varying levels and types of participation are common, with each offering value for the community.

KEY STAFF INTERVIEWS

ALA sees its responsibility as responding to the needs articulated by libraries, recognizing that needs tend to differ across library and community types, and supporting rural and minimally resourced libraries that have limited professional development options. Through the LTC initiative, the leadership team learned more about where libraries are in relation to community engagement work. In particular, they gained deeper understanding of the realities, thematic issues, opportunities, and challenges that are top-of-mind for each community or library type, as well as the barriers to advancing this work.

Staff felt the initiative was a **success** for the following reasons:

- A strong response from the library field demonstrated clear interest in the topic; participation goals were surpassed.
- They realized their ability to provide libraries with a broad understanding of available models.
- A more structured partnership between NCDD and libraries has taken form; joint presentations and longer-term collaborative expectations have been productive outcomes.
- There is interest in using these models to inform library degree curricula (at least one professor is already teaching them).
- Some trainees representing small rural libraries were first-time ALA conference attendees, thanks to the travel stipend, increasing their representation and voice.

Thinking about what made the initiative successful, the ALA and NCDD leadership team noted that all work was grounded in mutually aligned goals. Effective structures were put in place for frequent and open communications that reinforced a constructive working relationship in which both parties benefitted. One interviewee gave credit to ALA for setting unambiguous expectations from the get-go. Both ALA and non-ALA interviewees described a “hand-in-hand” approach to the work, and shared approaches in terms of being meticulous with planning, timelines, and details (e.g., a weekly call schedule and regular check-ins were appreciated). Non-ALA staff who were interviewed characterized ALA’s work as “heroic.”

Staff agreed about what worked well and what could have been improved (e.g., some webinars better suited participants’ needs than others). Interviewees were consistent in their view that Series 2 was more challenging for participants and the models less suited for institutions with rigid bureaucratic structures. They noted that few academic libraries are currently thinking about “external” (off-campus) audiences, and the participants would have been better served by resources to help them identify how to work with students and faculty or within the classroom.

ALA staff unanimously described being part of something much larger and connecting to the bigger picture. They felt this initiative was representative of ALA’s work and direction overall; not only was it a continuation of the original LTC, it was a visible undertaking within ALA’s Libraries Transform effort. Staff see the work as ongoing and transcending specified grant-funded projects. As an example, one staff member noted that a library-led media literacy training will be more effective if it takes into consideration the issues the community is facing. Another pointed out that when patrons engage in dialogue and deliberation, emergent ideas and priorities can and should inform other programmatic decisions. While engaging the community is a goal in and of itself, that process can also fundamentally change how libraries operate and perceive their core function.

To build on what’s been accomplished thus far and take this approach going forward, staff felt this work should continue across a range of initiatives. There was recognition that a

“driver” will be needed – but that it’s neither feasible nor desirable for ALA or NCDD to play this role.

Instead, staff proposed a combination of approaches to build and strengthen a CoP that connects in person, through email listservs, and regularly scheduled video check-in calls (to listen to and learn from peers). Staff also raised the possibility of Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) doing training delivery, as they perceived that organization might have capacity and is under-utilized. COSLA, staff felt, could potentially contract, through a state library, an in-state facilitator to offer professional development training.

MOVING FORWARD

The fact that ALA makes this work visible adds credibility and provides a rationale for library staff to make a case to higher-ups. The visibility and support at the ALA level are very meaningful to trainees; one stated, *“I appreciate ALA’s investment in PPO to do this work. The commitment of starting this in 2013 and still be supporting it in 2018 and asking, ‘what’s next?’ makes me feel very good about the direction of ALA.”* However, several interviewees encouraged ALA to make opportunities *more* visible, featuring a call to participate more prominently and emphasizing why the opportunity is important.

Case study interviewees felt it was important to keep building on what already exists. Some state library associations, for example, have an interest group for trainers (e.g., the Washington Association of Library Trainers) or other potentially relevant interest groups. One interviewee in particular mentioned they would like to see a focus on school libraries, where they felt some of the models might work with minimal adaptation. A few suggested that ALA promote and provide links to other trainings that might build library staff’s capacities that will support this work. Another mentioned confusion around prior meetings at ALA conferences that attempted to bring together librarians interested in civic and community engagement, but this person also had positive feedback about recent community engagement roundtables where people could select topics of interest to them. The interviewee noted that the roundtables would be a popular model for interest groups.

One interviewee described how learning about dialogue methods developed their interest in change management, the collective term for approaches to organizational change and problem-solving. Also based in strategic dialogue, change management similarly involves talking to the community. Appreciative inquiry and human-centered design are popular interactive change management strategies that the interviewee noted as especially attractive to academic libraries.

Training Model Suggestions

Case study interview data show that staff and trainees alike felt that, as a learning tool, live webinars are limited in their value. As such, there was widespread agreement during interviews that better and more robust web resources along with an online learning curriculum could be designed to provide a range of opportunities for learning at the library's convenience. People are motivated by personal connections, which occur naturally during in-person training but are hard to establish over the phone or through a virtual training in which the learner is situated in a passive information-receiving role.

LTC leadership and trainees had ideas about tweaking the online training delivery approach to make it more interactive, engaging, and personal. Zoom video communication tools were suggested by both groups as an online forum that allows cohorts to share and interact. Zoom allows a moderator to send people into their own video-enabled chat rooms to communicate in smaller groups about specific topics they're interested in. This tool could be easily layered with a virtual training approach. One trainee suggested a different modular approach: creating an online class (as opposed to a webinar) with modules and reading in between.

Lastly, a regional training model was suggested by a few trainees who noted that they just don't engage as well when ideas are delivered online. Given the costs associated with national conferences, a regional system might allow for greater participation with the ability for more frequent follow-up and interaction during the implementation process.

Discussion, Recommendations, & Conclusion

Training & Developing Library Professionals

Training goals were far exceeded in terms of numbers, and interviewees largely agreed that this work is important and should be a central purpose of libraries, though they were at varying stages of implementation. Patterns of implementation indicate that this process might be likened to a slow burn, as many trainees are finding that this work will require a shift in culture as well as structural changes within their library. Given progress reported so far, though, the evaluation team is optimistic about the future trajectory of the trainees, who reported that they intend to continue to apply what they learned at notably high rates – whether they participated in the training in person and online or online-only.

Furthermore, findings from this study highlight the fact that this initiative is part of a larger fabric of intersecting and complementary efforts to engage communities as core work. Given prior experience and success in this domain, ALA is well positioned to continue to support this work in numerous ways, both directly and indirectly. The fact that participants were not motivated by collecting digital badges can be understood as a positive outcome; these professionals were not approaching LTC trainings solely as a professional development opportunity, their nonchalance about pursuing that recognition suggests a deeper desire to engage in this work.

Inclusive & Accessible Learning Opportunities

Training is never one-size-fits-all. One advantage of LTC's design was that it was expressly tailored to different participant audiences and took their respective needs into consideration. Beyond ALA and NCDD's commitment to inclusion across library types, explicit focus on small and rural libraries – and provision of travel stipends to make participation possible for librarians from less resourced areas – brought training opportunities to libraries that are often left out. Overall, evidence suggests that every effort was made to make libraries feel included and provide ample support along the way to facilitate participant success.

The Status Report recognized a commitment to inclusivity and accessibility on the part of project leadership following Series 1 (Norlander et al., 2017). These priorities continued to characterize the remainder of the initiative. While focusing less overtly on issues of equity and diversity, Series 2 and 3 also had high rates of live participation – demonstrating ease of access – and offered webinar recordings online for free, a feature that was utilized extensively.

Of course, inclusivity goes beyond library type or geographic region to include consideration of distinct learning styles and realities. In future initiatives, even more people could potentially benefit from curriculum that was designed for different learning preferences (audio, visual, etc.) and abilities.

Supporting Communities of Practice

There was ambiguity about how best to develop and support a community of practice around this work. Trainees were interested in and showed need for potential benefits of a CoP. In particular, peer sharing around experiences of putting the training into practice appealed to trainees. Likewise, shared barriers to uptake and implementation, suggested a need for support that only a CoP of peers could provide.

The ideal frameworks for designing a CoP remain an open question. The only thing everyone agrees about is that success would require a thoughtful approach, either through a dispersed or a centralized model. Both approaches could function well, depending on which entity could start leadership. Regardless of the model, a long-term CoP strategy could and should plan for members to increasingly take on leadership roles. Another important part of a CoP strategy is to incorporate opportunities for in-person contact for members. In-person interactions are critical to building the rapport and trust needed for individuals' personal investment in a community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the ideas for improving LTC that surfaced during key staff interviews were also raised by trainees, which affirms that ALA has a solid working understanding of its constituents' situations. Visibility and support at the ALA level were consistently noted as being very meaningful, which suggests that these legitimizing associations should continue if possible.

Trainees whose libraries are earlier in the process want a better sense of how to choose an appropriate community engagement model. Descriptions on ALA's website might be reframed to present the models in a way that allows libraries to explore and choose different tools based on their needs and where they are in their progress along the spectrum of integrating this work into operational norms.

While many trainees noted that facilitation and other skills they learned in training are transferrable and highly useful, they described needing to further develop skills related to facilitation scaffolding (convening, identifying appropriate partners, getting people into the room, etc.) and establishing strong partnerships (assessing potential partners, communicating with partners, etc.). Small and rural libraries also need strategies for doing this work despite resource constraints, which could be presented as an opportunity rather than a burden.

In addition, trainees need to build on their learning by practicing and doing; complementing their training with personal experience that deepens their skills and confidence. Various approaches might be effective:

- ALA and NCDD could explore the efficacy of a train-the-trainer model that supports librarians with more experience to mentor peers new to exploring these models.
- Internal practice should be encouraged to develop buy-in, support, and familiarity before taking engagement tools into the community; while this approach won't work with all methods, in larger systems and academic settings it has helped implementers present the work in a way that demonstrates value.
- Because learning outcomes and application tend to be enhanced by opportunities for participants to engage and

establish personal connections, ALA could help secure the funding needed to provide webcams to libraries that don't have them. That way, online trainings could make use of video-enabled smaller-group dialogue around specific models or other topics of interest.

To expand LTC's effort toward inclusivity and accessibility, accommodation could be made for those with auditory impairments who use closed captioning, lower level broadband options for those with limited bandwidth, or Spanish subtitles for the many libraries that function bilingually. ALA leadership could learn additional techniques by taking advantage of the many online resources devoted to best practices for online facilitation – practices that they could pass along by modeling for constituents.

A regional in-person training model could also be explored as a potential complement to a tweaked online curricular delivery model.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the IMLS-funded Libraries Transforming Communities: Models for Change demonstrated an effective program strategy that met its objectives of offering opportunities for librarians to build skills toward forging community relationships, and supporting these practices by promoting opportunities to the library field. In particular, LTC: Models for Change successfully mounted an inclusive and accessible learning program that engaged librarians from diverse backgrounds – in particular those from large urban libraries, academic libraries, and libraries serving rural or small communities. Overall, this investment in professional development in community and civic engagement skills further supported and solidified the library field's enthusiasm for this work.

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