

Howard County Library System (HCLS) requests \$399,599 to fund **Pathways to Success: Professional Development for Skilled New Americans**, a two-year implementation project providing contextualized workplace English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, job search skills, and interview/job preparation training for skilled immigrants, and leadership and training for a cohort of public libraries to adapt all or part of the project model. Project partners are The Howard County Office of Workforce Development and Luminus Network for New Americans. The project directly aligns with the National Leadership Grant’s goal 1, objective 1.3 of promoting libraries as centers for continuous learning for individuals of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Project Justification

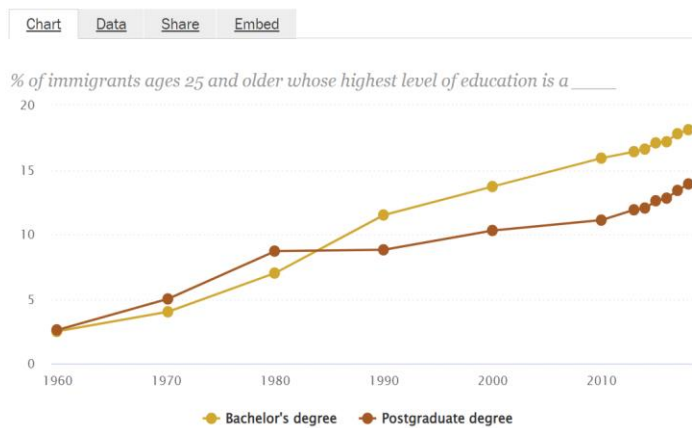
The human capital of recent immigrants to the U.S. is rising. This project serves as a model of how to position libraries to meet the challenges of these shifting demographics. Immigrants are projected by economists to drive future growth (adding 18 million) in the U. S. working-age population through 2035 (Pew Research Center and US Census data). Yet The Migration Policy Institute report of August 2018 notes that “economists project a shortage of 5 million U.S. workers with post-secondary education and training by the end of this decade”. In communities across the country, research shows that immigrants remain more likely than U.S. born workers to work in lower-skill occupations. Although Pew Research Center analysis of federal government data has indicated that the share of immigrants in high-skill nonmechanical jobs has risen in recent decades, 40% of immigrants (vs. 29% of U.S.-born workers) still hold jobs that require mechanical skills and are not necessarily high-wage jobs (Bennett, 2020). Even as the share of immigrants in jobs has risen, immigrants are still not attaining well-paying jobs at comparable rates to the native born, and limited English proficiency is correlated with lower wages (Bernstein & Vilter, 2018).

Skilled Immigrant Definition: A work-authorized foreign-born and foreign-trained worker with at least (2) years of formal or informal education, training, or on-the-job experience that has led to special skills, training, knowledge, and/or abilities for certain types of work. (MD Skilled Immigrant Task Force)

English language proficiency and job training are high priorities for this growing population of new Americans, who face challenges to enable them to escape being underemployed and essentially trapped in lower and middle skilled jobs that are not fully using their training or skills.

Employers may be unaware of how to connect with the many qualified, skilled immigrants already in the country but who are vital to the workforce across industries. This project focuses on the assets and aspirations of new Americans, (immigrants, refugees, and asylees), and it enables HCLS to address a gap in library practice for a subset of that group defined as ‘skilled immigrants’ who face barriers to attain employment commensurate with their professional skills.

Educational attainment among U.S. immigrants, 1960-2018



Mitigating Brain Waste

An increased share of immigrants have attained a bachelor’s degree or higher, but many well-educated and trained skilled immigrants face barriers to employment in their field of expertise and are earning lower wages than their native-born counterparts. One-quarter of immigrant college graduates in the U.S – nearly 2 million people— are either unemployed or work in jobs that require no more than a high school degree, and struggle to make ends meet. Studies report this underemployment and artificially limited income (“brain waste”) has significant repercussions for individual workers, their families, and our wider society (Bergson-Shilcock, A. & Witte, J., 2015 and Batalova, J. & Fix, M., 2021). In Maryland alone, the

Maryland Skilled Immigrant Task Force reports that 20 percent of the college-educated foreign-born population is underemployed or unemployed. Immigrants comprise 15 percent of the state’s population, and 21 percent of Howard County’s population, so this represents a significant waste of human capital. This scenario is repeated across the nation.

Public library response to immigrant needs varies widely. The ALA's June 2019 white paper, *Library Programs and New Americans*, identifies current practices and programs offered by libraries to new Americans as English language acquisition, citizenship preparation, and digital literacy. The paper notes libraries offer free and trusted services and a vital support network for new Americans, however, wide variance exists in response to immigrant needs based on several factors, including budgetary constraints, shifting population, and local priorities. Some libraries focus on rudimentary English language skills and support for attaining citizenship, and some provide services for middle-skilled immigrants. For example, Kansas City Public Library's English for Vocational Trades – Carpentry directly connects immigrants with English language support with the goal of passing a professional test for a career as a union carpenter. Los Angeles Public Library's New Americans Initiative focuses on immigration and citizenship information through 60-90 minute phone sessions and online classes. Nashville Public Library's adult literacy services provide programs and resources for English language learning, immigration, naturalization, and citizenship support. Less common are libraries that provide contextualized English proficiency training that integrates workforce content beyond the baseline level of English competency or middle skilled vocational training.

The **Pathways to Success: Professional Development for Skilled New Americans** project plans to work directly in this niche. The project enables HCLS to expand services customized for skilled immigrants and demonstrate how others can adapt this model (or parts thereof) to start their own program serving new Americans in their communities.

HCLS Identified the Need

Libraries in most communities are an important entry point to services for new Americans. For the past 34 years, Project Literacy, HCLS' adult basic education curriculum, mainly served adults with low-literacy skills and/or learning disabilities engaging in low-wage or entry-level jobs. In a 2019 Project Literacy class survey, 67 percent of students indicated they had a goal of finding a better job. Staff and community organizations serving new Americans noticed a shift in the last five years in particular of a growing number of immigrants in the community with a higher level of education, mirroring research showing that trend. MD Skilled Immigrant Task Force reports that 1 in 7 Marylanders was born in another country and nearly two-thirds have at least some post-secondary education. Many new Americans learn about Project Literacy and turn to HCLS for customized ESL (to workplace and job interview specifics), English Conversation practice centered on cultural differences and workplace environments, and additional assistance and resources so they can attain jobs commensurate with their skills.

To meet that need, in 2019 HCLS applied for and was awarded a 2020-2021 IMLS Planning Project: Career Pathways for Skilled Immigrants (see supp. doc 3) whose target audience is skilled immigrants and developing Library curriculum in partnership with community organizations serving that population to enhance workforce development. Guided by an Advisory Board of 20 stakeholders serving the immigrant community, new American participation increased 300% (15 proposed, 60 served) and immediate impacts measured through surveys included 95% felt more knowledgeable about the job-search process, 88% will use what they learned in the job-search process, 84% felt more confident about the job-search process, and 90% were more aware of resources and services provided by the library.

HCLS is proposing to scale up the planning grant model to reach more participants and deepen the involvement and services provided by Advisory Board partners and community volunteers. Many from the Advisory Board will continue in that role for the new grant, with Luminus and the Howard County Office of Workforce Development partnering with HCLS to expand their support and engagement with the target audiences.

Howard County populations have become increasingly diverse with growing shares of minority residents, surpassing that of the state and the nation with 2019 data showing 20.8% of residents born outside of the country (Institute for Immigration Research, 2022). For the first time, the 2020 Census shows that Maryland is a majority-minority state with only 47.2% of the population non-Hispanic White. Of the 60 immigrants who enrolled in the Library's Career Pathways for Skilled Immigrant Planning Project, 56% identified themselves as Asians, 24% as Blacks, and 18% as Hispanic. Despite 68% of the group having advanced degrees from their native countries, 78% of the Blacks, 63% of the Hispanic, and 56%

of the Asians reported that they were unemployed, underemployed, or exploring possible career opportunities to enter the job market.

This project has two target populations: skilled immigrants and public libraries taking part in a training cohort. Library cohort members will participate virtually, and new American students can participate in the project virtually for some classes and/or in person. This project will implement the model developed by the Career Pathways for Skilled Immigrant Planning Project, extended through this August. Based on that success, HCLS is confident that it can scale up an implementation project with these primary objectives:

1. Delivering classes and activities for 120 skilled immigrant participants using the model and partnerships
2. Forming a cohort of at least five library systems interested in adapting curriculum
3. Creating toolkits and a library training plan for four curriculum levels outlined in the work plan
4. Incorporating Skilled Immigrants Focus Group recommendations to revise and adjust the project

Project Work Plan

The project design is based on implementing recommendations from the planning project Advisory Board and a six-person Focus Group formed by skilled immigrant participants and includes: (1) Forming an online project community through Facebook and LinkedIn groups, (2) Adding more in-person networking classes and mock interviews (some partner-led) and including understanding American culture and how it impacts the workplace, (3) Modifying the website and promotional materials for easier comprehension by New Americans, (3) Digital literacy tech help labs focusing on online job searching and job application skills, (4) Luminus staff brokering on-site and off-site workplace ESL to directly support new American workers, and (5) Creating a virtual tour of the county to help students learn about all the resources available to them.

To address digital equity issues in education, laptops and hotspots will be made available to student participants who lack access to the Internet so they can pursue employment opportunities, virtual learning, online research, and stay abreast of the development in their desired career field. Furthermore, the participants will have access to monthly digital literacy tech help labs and self-directed learning for digital literacy programs to keep pace with essential workplace computer skills and English language programs in-class and from home.

Mentoring and Training Libraries

Year two of this project includes mentoring and training cohort libraries to tailor the curriculum and model levels to meet the needs of their local new Americans while considering their capacity and network of community support. An important aspect of this training will be mentoring the cohort library systems about community resource analysis to establish partnerships with community organizations (such as the partnership with Luminus that HCLS has established). Demonstrating how these programs work and how they can continue to improve will help more libraries meet the demands created by shifting demographics in many communities nationwide.

HCLS understands that it cannot do this important work alone. The project includes these key elements that will increase the reach and impact of the implementation project:

1. An advisory board, including skilled immigrants, with continuity from the planning project
2. Two key partnerships that bring multilingual staff brokered by Luminus on-site and off-site workplace ESL support to new American workers, and Howard County Office of Workforce Development expertise in mock job interviews, access to apprenticeship opportunities, job search workshops, and job fairs
3. A Focus Group formed by, and comprised of, skilled immigrant participants
4. Sample curriculum levels that build on increasing staff resources and scope/complexity, that can be modified and shared in toolkits and webinars
5. A cohort of libraries to learn and plan for their own new Americans programming, based on the model

The project has these instructional strategies:

- Small size reading, writing, speaking, and listening classes, including one-on-one instruction and conversation with native English speakers, career exploration needs, and Focus Group real-world and simulated work-based projects
- Workforce development opportunities from partners to prepare for job searching, including mock job interviews, access to apprenticeship opportunities, job search workshops, and job fairs
- Wrap-around services from partners to provide post-employment support, special presentations on immigration issues, and immigration consultation
- Connecting participants with each other, local college, non-profit organizations, and statewide workforce development resources and training
- Mentoring and training cohort libraries to tailor the curriculum and model levels to their needs
- Digital Literacy Tech Help Labs monthly

Four to eight classes will be scheduled every semester. A semester will last ten to twelve weeks, and seven semesters will be delivered during the grant period. HCLS will continue to revise and build on the project curriculum to meet the students' needs, with the possibility of writing new curricula in response to requests for new classes.

The project model has four components developed in the planning grant, and each builds on the level preceding it:

1. Basic English Language Classes

Conversation classes with topics focused on conversational skills on professional topics and working in America. Organized like a survey course, conversation classes cover a wide range of work topics, customized for professions, industries, and job functions. Participants will not need to formally register or take an assessment for this service level. This will be organized as drop-in classes, repeating as needed.

2. Comprehensive English Language

English classes focused on specific English topics (with focused instruction and small class size). Students will need to formally register and take an English assessment to participate. Students will be grouped by interest and English level. Libraries can use either formal assessments like CASAS or TABE or informal English assessments. Libraries with fewer resources can also adjust the length of the semester. The topic courses will include reading, writing, speaking, listening, and pronunciation. Additionally, libraries can consider adding one-on-one tutoring for participants with specific needs.

3. Job Search and Networking

Level three will focus on English language for the workplace and building skills to gain employment
 Exploration of O*NET (U.S. Department of Labor's online system), networking strategies and sites like LinkedIn
 Job search strategies for sites like Indeed, CareerBuilder, and ZipRecruiter
 Digital literacy courses on Microsoft, Google, and other digital tools
 Northstar – digital literacy assessments to earn badges and certificates to be included in job applications
 Individual digital literacy labs focusing on online job searching and job application skills
 Co-host job fairs - Libraries might partner with their local workforce development centers, colleges, or businesses to co-host job fairs on professions specifically applicable for skilled immigrants

4. Workforce Preparation

This level supports participants who are making the step from preparing for work into applying, interviewing, and starting new jobs. There is also increased collaboration with local workforce organizations to ensure access to appropriate and timely training for the participants. Services include:

- Workshops and one-on-one support for resume and cover letter writing
- Additional job fairs and networking training
- Additional digital skills training customized to fit the needs of the participants
- Mock interviews
- Case management for post-employment coaching and support

Project Management Leadership Team

- Emma Ostendorp, Project Manager, HCLS

- Mike Mitchell, Executive Director and CEO of Luminus Network for New Americans
- Francine Trout, Director of Howard County Office of Workforce Development
- Ben Hamilton, Assistant Project Manager, HCLS

Partner Luminus is a non-profit organization whose strengths are immigration, social services, and community connections that address wrap-around services for the target audience. This project aligns with Luminus' New American Staffing placements initiative under which its staff facilitates language and other culturally relevant skills and resources delivered on-site at companies where their clients work. If there's a need, Luminus will refer workers in the New American Staffing program who have college degrees and/or have held professional jobs in their native countries to the grant project to receive business English instruction, job search, professional networking, and workforce preparation for jobs that are commensurate with their training and education. HCLS will provide flexible scheduling of classes to meet their needs. The worker can continue to stay with Luminus' program while getting help from the library.

Candidates take English Proficiency Assessment (CASAs Test), proctored either by Howard County Public Library or Luminus, and those receiving a score below 3 will be referred to HCLS' Project Literacy ESL program, which is separate from this grant project. Candidates receiving a score of 3 will be referred to Luminus for on-site and off-site workplace ESL courses held over Zoom or at the office. Candidates receiving a score higher than 3 will be fast-tracked to job placement and/or referred to Project Literacy's Pathway to Success program to improve their business English, job search and networking skills, and workforce preparation as needed.

A reciprocal referral arrangement will send participants that enter the Pathway to Success project to Luminus for immigration counseling and to connect them with post-employment and social service groups for housing and healthcare. Luminus will also provide presentations on important immigrant issues to new Americans. HCLS and Luminus will work together to produce a virtual tour video of resources in the county available to new Americans.

The Howard County Office of Workforce Development (HCOWD), as the other grant partner, will expand services they provided during the planning project to serve more people with the job searching, networking, and workforce preparation components of the model. Input from the immigrant Focus Group informs their increased engagement. For example, more mock interviews will be scheduled in response to planning project students identifying the mock interviews conducted by HCOWD as particularly valuable.

The Advisory Board (see supp. Doc 4) will consist of 12-15 people representing a network of organizations including Howard County's Office of Workforce Development, Howard Community College's English Language Center, Howard County Government, Maryland Department of Labor, Maryland Skilled Immigrant Task Force, Howard County Public Schools, the project partners, and two to four new American participants from the program. The Leadership Team will report project progress at meetings to gather recommendations for project improvement. Meetings will be held virtually to enable ease of participation for an anticipated large group.

Project staff includes a wide field of experts, including those with backgrounds in library adult education and English language education, immigrant advocacy groups, and workforce development who have engaged immigrants, and adult learners throughout their careers. Inclusive staffing with priorities on linguistic and cultural competencies will be prominent in job descriptions and hiring guidelines. The Project Manager, Assistant Manager/Data Specialist, Career Navigator, Instructional Specialist, and Intake/Assessment Specialist form the core HCLS project team working with a network of organizations, most of which are represented on the Advisory Board. Other than the specialists that form the Leadership Team of the project, key personnel will include language instructors for reading, writing, speaking, listening, English pronunciation, the Evaluator, and a Social Media Specialist.

The Library is providing as cost-share the classroom and tutorial cubicles for in-person instruction, the project team, and Advisory Board meeting space (and/or virtual software), and a large portion of the salaries of staff that include the Project Manager, the Assistant Manager, and many from the HCLS Communications and Partnership and Professional Development Departments, including a Professional Development Instructor, a Multimedia Producer, a Communications

Coordinator, a Website Designer, and a Graphics Designer. The toolkits, informational webinar, cohort training plan, social media, and website pages will reflect the professionalism and expertise of that staff and have clear and concise information that is appropriate for the target audiences. Projects that the Communications Dept. will produce include:

- A Facebook group for project participants and Project Literacy students
- Website presence describing the project, providing a contact to learn more, offering toolkits and applications for interested library systems to be part of a learning cohort.
- Toolkits (2-one on developing partnerships, another on curriculum phases/models)
- Informational webinars (on-demand and/or through ALA, PLA, and MLA)
- Presentations at library conferences (at least 1 during 2-year grant period)
- Flyers on the project posted on the HCLS website for the Advisory Board/partners to share with their networks.
- Virtual tour of the county to help project participants and other interested immigrant groups learn about all the resources available to them, accessible from the HCLS YouTube channel and the project website pages.

Grant funds will be used to support key project staff salaries, costs for an evaluator, partner services, and a stipend paid to each cohort system for their time spent in the training activities.

Incorporating the Perspectives of Skilled Immigrants

Skilled Immigrants are in key staff roles such as the Project Manager and Career Navigator positions, and new American participants in the program will hold two to four places on the Advisory Board. Their life histories and experiences finding work as new Americans inform and guide revisions to improve the project and provide mentoring and responsiveness to the skilled immigrant students and Focus Group members.

This Focus Group was formed during the planning grant, with six new American students led by the project Career Navigator from HCLS. Recommendations from this group had immediate impacts on aspects of the project. For example, the Group reviewed the project website information, and their suggestions resulted in revisions to the website and project promotional materials for easier comprehension by New Americans. The Focus Group will be continued for the implementation project, meeting every other month for about one to two hours, during which group members are given real-world topics to work on, plus suggest their own ideas. In addition, the Advisory Board will bring the perspectives of their new American clients. Advisory Board meetings include not only project-focused matters on the agenda but encourage sharing updates about their client needs and networking with the group for ideas and solutions. Student representatives will participate on the Advisory Board. And finally, the library cohort will bring the perspectives of their immigrant population needs and concerns, such as the large influx of Afghan immigrants Howard County has experienced from the aftermath of the U.S. military departure from Afghanistan, as just one example.

The project Leadership Team meets weekly and will track progress towards implementations and outcomes from:
Expert Advice

- Soliciting input from the Advisory Board to ensure transparent and thorough implementation of the project
- Maintaining regular communications with partner agencies to ensure full execution of work plans
- Incorporating Focus Group recommendations
- Connecting with State libraries and various library workgroups to recruit libraries for the learning cohort

Outputs

- Monitoring recruitment activities and registration records and adjusting to reach the target number of participants
- Tracking improvement in the participants' English language skills from pre and post assessments
- Monitoring attendance records and offering timely interventions if participants' persistence problems arise
- Tracking the number of jobs applied for and job interviews attained by participants

Assessments

- Using formal language assessment tools to pre-/post-test the participants to measure English language skills improvement (The assessment tools we plan to use for all participants are CASAS GOALS and Life & Work series, both approved by the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) for use with adult learners.)

- Administering Project Outcome* surveys every six months to measure participants' knowledge, confidence, application of new skills, and awareness of resources. Analysis of survey data will be used to revise and adjust curriculums, instruction, and class lineups to meet the needs of the participants.
- Tracking the project website, Facebook group, and virtual video tours engagement and viewing analytics
- Monitoring partner services alignment with the needs of the participants and number of referrals
- Surveying the cohort about toolkit content effectiveness
- Follow-up survey for students and cohort participants administered 12 weeks after completion of the program to see what actions have been taken.

*Project Outcome is a toolkit with surveys designed by the Public Library Association (PLA) to give libraries guidelines on changes to be made to program activities and help public libraries measure and share the impact of services provided.

Findings from the project, best practices, toolkits, and service models will be disseminated digitally to the Advisory Board, stakeholders, libraries, immigrant groups, and the community at large through presentations at state and national conferences, local workshops, and on the HCLS website. HCLS has a Racial Equity Alliance (see Brave Voices, Brave Choices on the HCLS website) of approximately 20 groups in the county who are invested and active in arenas that include immigrant concerns. Project updates and presentations will be shared with this group, as appropriate.

Core Grant Activities

These activities will occur throughout the grant term:

- Continuous registering of participants and completing intake questionnaires
- Primarily one-on-one instruction by semesters. Some classes are groups to facilitate networking and conversation practice
- Collecting informal feedback daily from classes and weekly team meetings
- Evaluating participants' English proficiency in work and life contexts
- Matching participants with the service model that is appropriate for their level of English competency and goals based upon the intake interviews and participant feedback for classes
- Referring participants to Luminus for New American Staffing services and immigration counseling and facilitating HCOWD partner activities such as job fairs
- Digital Literacy Tech Help Labs monthly

YEAR ONE

The first three months of year one will be focused on assembling the Project Team, forming the Advisory Board, and recruiting skilled immigrant participants. Recruiting participants will be done consistently throughout the two years to meet the goal of 120 participants. These participants will mainly be new recruits, but some may be people who were in the initial 60 served by the planning grant. Registered participants will be given an intake questionnaire to collect demographic information, education attainment, training and credentials received from country of origin, work history before and after immigration, and barriers in getting employment commensurate with their education and training.

Recruitment activities will focus on successful processes set up during the planning grant and include direct outreach and disseminating information on the HCLS website, through partner agencies, county government, the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses that serve the immigrant communities, and faith communities. The Leadership Team will meet with instructors weekly to discuss challenges and successes. The Advisory Board will meet monthly for the first four months and then bi-monthly for the rest of the grant period to review available project data and to discuss achievements and challenges. Additionally, establishing financial processes in payment for contractual positions, subcontracting agencies, and project purchases will also be completed during the first three months of the grant term. Purchasing language assessment tools and digital language programs for instruction and meetings with partner agencies to coordinate services will also take place during these initial months. The Career Navigator will gather data from MD Labor's Labor Market Information and/or Mid-Maryland Workforce Development Board, to identify in-demand jobs and

necessary credentials and skills associated with these jobs. This information will be used to inform and guide the job seekers in the project to find suitable employment

YEAR ONE – OCTOBER

Instruction will start with flexible class schedules and dynamic programming built on resources and curriculums developed during the planning year and will focus on developing the skills (linguistic, technical, and soft) that the participants need to increase their earning potential and find jobs in their areas of expertise. Classes on job search, networking, workforce preparation, resume writing, and mock interviews will be available concurrently based on the participant's interests and needs. Semester schedules will be determined, and class lineups coordinated with partner agencies based on findings from the planning project. The Project Manager will communicate with partner agencies to coordinate services.

The second half of year one will focus on the development of full training courses for the library cohort to learn different service models for implementation in their respective communities. Training materials and the plan will be developed by the HCLS Professional Development Manager, the project Instructional Specialist, and the Project Manager and reviewed by the Advisory Board. Partner agencies and other stakeholders will begin collaborating on storyboarding and planning the production and filming of a virtual tour of resources in Howard County available to New Americans. This video, which will be released in the spring of 2023, will be introduced by the grant partners, who will briefly discuss their services, and include a map of locations, and hours. This video is in response to a particular interest in this information from the planning grant Focus Group of skilled immigrant participants.

YEAR TWO

Year two will be a continuation of recruitment of students and delivery of classes based on the model, with continuous refinements. Finding the right approach is less a matter of following a rubric and more a listening activity. The one-on-one model for classes and support allows the library staff to form a relationship with each participant and encourage them to form their own network in the community. This enables true learning about their new American communities' needs, so we can adjust and design services that are both relevant to them and appropriate for our organizational capacity. The Leadership Team will also continue to refine training materials for the cohort and toolkits. Based on the feedback from students and the Advisory Board, the virtual tour of county resources may be updated.

Activities for the Cohort

HCLS will recruit libraries across the country through professional associations, national and regional library conferences, and Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA). As noted by Dawn Lavelle, Director of Connecticut State Library's Division of Library Development in her letter of support for this project, "CSL/DLD will work to promote the library cohort opportunities and the project in our state and beyond." We are partnering with Connecticut, Maryland, Washington, and other state library agencies to assist with outreach to different local library systems and associations. The goal is to find libraries in demographically diverse communities through presentations to national and state level library workgroups and if accepted, a presentation at an ALA conference in the spring of 2023.

An informational webinar will aid the call for applications for the Library Learning Cohort. A selection committee of professionals will review and rank applications, interview, and select libraries to join the cohort. The selection committee will include Advisory Board members, HCLS staff, partners, and skilled immigrants. Cohort participants will receive a stipend for attending all training activities such as joining Advisory Board meetings and auditing project classes. Applicants will be recruited who: (1) hold full-time positions as library and information professionals; (2) are committed to participating in the project for one year; (3) have support to apply knowledge gained from the project in their own library. Our priority is to recruit and create a cohort that will represent diverse sociodemographic backgrounds, types of positions, sizes of libraries, and capacities for implementing new American programming. Applicants will be required to submit a resume, a supervisor's recommendation and support letter; demographics on the new American community they serve, and vision statements. Selections of the applications will be made by a Selection Committee led by the HCLS Project Manager. Cohort training materials and toolkits will be developed in collaboration with HCLS' Professional

Development Instructor, the Communications Department, and partners, and all cohort training information will be accessible from the project website pages.

Applicants will be expected to complete the training from October 2023 through May 2024, devoting about three hours a month for each member. The Project Team will collaborate with HCLS Training Facilitators from the Professional Development Department to conduct a 30-minute introductory call with each applicant to learn their background and understand their reasons for participating. These conversations offer an opportunity to build rapport and trust essential to learning. The insights gained from these interviews inform the curation of the small cohort group to ensure diversity across demographic characteristics, sizes of library systems, as well as the personality of participants and new American needs in their communities.

The training includes:

- Taking part in one 6-hour virtual training to learn about the four service models
- Attending a minimum of three Advisory Board meetings and participating in three intake interviews of skilled immigrants
- Observing a minimum of three one-hour language and/or workforce preparation classes such as conversation, writing, speaking, pronunciation, reading, mock interview, resume/cover letter writing, and current event discussions
- Meeting with the Project Team bimonthly to draft and refine plans for local implementation of service models
- Completing an evaluation questionnaire of the training at the conclusion of the project, and a follow-up survey 12 weeks after the training

What are the indicators of success?

HG&Co, a nationally known planning and evaluation firm, will provide evaluation support for this project, including regular meetings to advise on the overall evaluation of design, frequency, and timing of assessments, triangulation and appropriateness of data sources, survey instrumentation including question design and order, data management and analysis strategies, and interpretation. Of particular interest will be to inform the evaluation design in cultural awareness, as working with disadvantaged populations, especially those with language barriers, can compromise the reliability and validity of the data. The team aims to minimize this potential bias. The evaluator will attend project team meetings every month, along with attendance at the advisory meetings and focus groups. HCLS will carry out the data collection implementation, entry, cleaning, and analysis, and together HG&Co and HCLS will review the analysis and discuss implications for HCLS to report out.

The ultimate indicator of success will be measured by how many skilled immigrants get jobs commensurate with their experience. Another indicator of success occurs when others connect via the web pages or through the Advisory Board connections to learn more about the project and indicate interest in bringing this work to their communities.

Specifically, we will use the project targets and corresponding measures listed in the logic model (see supp. doc 5) with these goals:

120 skilled immigrant participants

- Increased awareness of classes by immigrants
- 80% improving English proficiency
- Satisfaction with classes and recommendations to others
- 80% percent complete all classes and activities
- 30% receive invitations for job interviews

5 Cohort Library Systems

- 80% partner with an organization in their community, or expand an existing partnership to reach skilled immigrants
- Impact of website, toolkits, industry presentations, and a final report showing they facilitate decision making in libraries about opportunities for their own new American initiatives
- 100% rate the toolkit and training materials of value and assistance

Impact of serving on the Advisory Board for strengthening partnerships and providing wrap-around services for new Americans.

DIVERSITY PLAN

Howard County, MD is a fast-growing, increasingly diverse community of 325,000 residents, making it an ideal place to implement workforce development projects for immigrants, especially those who are skilled and highly educated. Thirty-five percent of the foreign-born population have attained college or graduate degrees versus 30 percent for the American-born.

The skilled immigrant community representing this diversity is involved in the implementation of this project through leadership roles in the Project Team and Advisory Board. For example, the Project Manager is an immigrant herself, with 20 years of experience working with the diverse customers that use the Library's adult education services. The Advisory Board enables coordination across sectors; employers, education providers, and community-serving organizations and intends to provide as broad a perspective as possible in defining the needs of the immigrant audience, and to provide multiple ways the community can access the project through the strength of the Advisory Board networks. Inclusive project staffing will prioritize linguistic and cultural competencies in job descriptions and hiring guidelines.

NATIONAL IMPACT

Pathways to Success: Professional Development for Skilled New Americans adapts current adult education library practices to new immigrant audiences, incorporates evaluation and decision-making that evolves during the project, and shares the information widely through the project web presence, the ALA New Americans Library Project, and Project Outcome resources. This project will inform libraries nationwide on how they can strengthen their roles, be responsive to the shifting needs of new Americans, and identify classes, staff competencies, services, and partnerships to overcome key barriers to the integration of skilled immigrants into the workforce. HCLS will submit a project overview and summary of outcomes to the New Americans Library Project, an initiative of the American Library Association's Public Programs Office, and present an overview of the project in a webinar and at 2024 ALA conferences (if accepted).

The project's final report will detail how decision-making evolved during the project and evaluate what worked well, what adjustments were needed, and reasons for revisions. It will include:

- Information on types of expertise and skills needed to work with immigrants effectively.
- A sample survey (template) for assessing the local landscape.
- An evidence-based method for developing and improving immigrant services (including examples of successful partnerships).
- Outreach and marketing approaches for different stages of implementation (e.g., a how-to guide for selecting and taking part in job fair events).
- An annotated bibliography of select resources for those interested in enhancing their services to New Americans.

This project improves the human capital and economic advancement of immigrants, boosting economic growth. Pathways to Success establishes practices for libraries to strengthen and contextualize English proficiency for work and career pathways so immigrants can achieve better job opportunities that match their professional and educational backgrounds. The success of this program will affect multiple generations of Americans, not just the economic self-sufficiency of the targeted skilled immigrants.

Pathways to Success: Professional Development for Skilled New Americans draws on meaningful collaborations with local non-profit and community development organizations, community associations, and individual community members that we involve in many capacities. The project is a collaborative effort that strives to develop field-wide best practices for public libraries in serving the unique needs of new Americans looking for employment opportunities that align with their professional backgrounds and training. This project strongly aligns with the goal of the National Leadership Grant program of building the workforce and institutional capacity for managing the national information infrastructure and serving the information and education needs of the public.

SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION	Pathways to Success: Professional Development for Skilled New Americans											
	AUG 2022	SEP 2022	OCT 2022	NOV 2022	DEC 2022	JAN 2023	FEB 2023	MAR 2023	APR 2023	MAY 2023	JUN 2023	JULY 2023
YEAR ONE AUGUST 2022-JULY 2023												
Hire and onboard project staff												
Identify Advisory Board Members												
Determine assessment measures for class participants												
Determine classes that support career paths												
KickOff Meeting with Advisory Board and Evaluator												
Financial procedures finalized for partners and grant												
Advisory Board Meetings (monthly, then bi-monthly)												
Focus Group meetings every other month												
Create project website pages												
Gather data on in-demand jobs and credentials and skills												
Finalize strategy for data collection and intake questionnaires												
Storyboard and produce Virtual Video: Spring 2023 release date												
Communications Team ongoing website, toolkits, informational video												
Outreach events with partners												
Project Team meetings												
Update class curriculum and objectives												
Ongoing Recruit of class participants throughout year one												
CLASSES and ACTIVITES												
Teach classes. Each semester is 10-12 weeks. Includes partner activities												
Digital Literacy Tech Help Labs monthly												
Pre-test of students on skills upon entry												
Post-test of students on skills (after 60 hours instruction)												
Post survey of students												
Luminus immigration counseling, workplace ESL												
Office of Workforce Development Job Fairs												
Identify other careers/classes to pursue long-term												
PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS												
Semester review of project effectiveness												
Monthly grant financial matters review												
Quarterly financial review of partner services												
Focus Group annual survey												

SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION	Pathways to Success: Professional Development for Skilled New Americans											
	AUG 2023	SEP 2023	OCT 2023	NOV 2023	DEC 2023	JAN 2024	FEB 2024	MAR 2024	APR 2025	MAY 2026	JUN 2027	JULY 2028
YEAR TWO AUGUST 2023-JULY 2024												
Advisory Board Meetings (bi-monthly) include cohort members												
Focus Group Meetings												
Update content as needed to project Website pages, toolkits												
Monthly project performance measures with grants financial team												
Outreach events with partners												
Project Team meetings (monthly)												
Log and record interactions of outside interest in project												
Update class curriculum and objectives												
Recruit new class participants												
Form Cohort Selection Committee												
Call for applications for the cohort												
Review and select cohort members												
Training activities for cohort												
CLASSES and ACTIVITES												
Teach classes. Each semester is 10-12 weeks. Includes partner activities	Semester IV			Semester V			Semester VI			Semester VII		
Digital Literacy Tech Help Labs monthly												
Pre-test of students on skills upon entry												
Post-test of students on skills (after 60 hours instruction)												
Post survey of students												
Luminus immigration counseling, workplace ESL												
Office of Workforce Development Job Fairs												
Identify other careers/classes to pursue long-term												
PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS												
Semester review of project effectiveness												
Monthly grant financial matters review												
Quarterly financial review of partner services												
Needs survey for instructors and participants												
Focus Group annual survey												
Evaluator interviews of Advisory Board, Focus Group and Instructors												
Prepare interim and final grant reports												
Update web pages with final report												
Submit summary of outcomes to New Americans Library Project												
Prepare and apply for webinar/conference presentations												
Survey of cohort participants												

A. Type

The primary digital products will be reports and promotional materials created in docx and pdf formats. Any images for promotional purposes will be made available in JPEG format.

B. Availability

Digital assets are stored on the Library's servers with passcode protected private access. Reports and any promotional materials will be made available as a PDF from the project web pages. These will be made openly available online (HCLS website pages) and not require authentication to access via standard web browsers.

C. Access

All new digital products will be owned by HCLS, and dissemination will be open access by default. All reports and formative and summative data will remove any identifying information about project participants prior to dissemination to any audience to protect the privacy of participants. Data storage and access to participant identification data will be subject to HCLS Board policy, and related constraints imposed by the Project Team and the Advisory Workgroup. Additionally, data related to informed consent has unique confidentiality guidelines that will be applicable such as participants with religious affiliations who do not want to be photographed.

D. Sustainability

All data will be kept on HCLS servers and preserved according to the organizational protocols for all materials. HCLS' IT Department will oversee data storage, ensuring the sustainability of the digital products.

A. Mission Statement

As stated in HCLS' Strategic Plan 2015-2020, HCLS' mission statement is "we deliver high quality public education for all." Our Vision statement is "a vital component of Howard County's renowned education system, we deliver excellence in education for everyone, advancing the economy and quality of life."

Under the above statements, HCLS is guided by this strategic priority: creating more and diverse educational opportunities to assist all community members (children, youth, and families) to reach their full potential, giving priority to previously underserved populations.

HCLS has a simultaneous and related focus on Asset Based Community Development, centered on the view that all individuals and communities, including those who have been historically oppressed and maligned, have rich assets alongside challenges and needs, and individuals and groups of residents are essential actors in further developing our communities.

B. Governance Structure

HCLS is governed by a seven-member independent Board of Trustees.

C. Service Area

Located in central Maryland, the demographics of the area that HCLS serves is as follows:

Population: 325,690

56% white

20% Black

19% Asian

7% Hispanic or Latino

21.1% Foreign Born

D. Organizational History

Howard County Library System (HCLS) is an award-winning library, established in 1940. Ranked among the nation's great public library systems, HCLS takes pride in receiving a Library of the Year Award, bestowed by Gale/Library Journal in 2013. HCLS is committed to ending structural racism and achieving true and sustained equity through intentional, systemic, and transformative library-community partnerships.

The community recognizes HCLS as an educational anchor. People of all ages participate in a selection of more than 20 signature HCLS educational events such as Battle of the Books, Summer Reading Clubs, Project Literacy, The Longest Table, HCLS Spelling Bee, author events, and STEAM classes. Seventy-nine percent of the county are registered users of the Library - the highest percentage in the entire state of Maryland.

HCLS' Project Literacy is the unit that will be implementing this initiative. For the past 34 years, Project Literacy, HCLS' adult basic education curriculum, mainly served adults with low-literacy skills and/or learning disabilities engaging in low wage or entry-level jobs. Staff and community organizations serving new Americans noticed a shift in the last five years in particular of a growing number of immigrants in the community with a higher level of education, mirroring research showing that trend, MD Skilled Immigrant Task Force reports that 1 in 7 Marylanders was born in another country and nearly two thirds have at least some post-secondary education. These new Americans learn about Project Literacy and turn to HCLS for customized ESL (to workplace and job interview specifics), English Conversation practice centered on cultural differences and workplace environments, and additional assistance and resources so they can attain jobs commensurate with their skills.