

Ready Now: Supporting Youth and Families During Crisis

The University of Maryland (UMD), in partnership with the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) and the Association of Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL), is requesting \$249,999 to broaden and improve the efficacy of the *Library Staff as Public Servants: A Field Guide for Preparing to Support Communities in Crisis* (“Field Guide”; Subramaniam, Braun, Asgarali-Hoffman, Jordan-Stovall, & Kodama, 2021). The Field Guide’s purpose is to prepare public library staff to support **historically marginalized youth and families**¹ during current and future crises (such as pandemic, hurricane, water supply, energy, wildfire, etc.) and/or the consequences of such crises (gaps in fundamental literacy, limited access to information, disparities in learning opportunities, etc.). This proposal leverages the project team’s recent participatory design (PD) work that focused on public library crisis related practices and identified a set of tasks deemed essential (hereafter “Essential Tasks”) in the Field Guide to serve historically marginalized youth and families before, during, and after crises (hereafter “Crisis Times”), including communities at all phases of crisis from those who are currently facing the consequences of past crises to those who are moving forward after crises but need to be ready for what may come next. While the Field Guide serves as an all-in-one guide and a proof-of-concept for preparing public library staff to serve communities during crises, we learned that staff need support to execute and customize the Essential Tasks for local communities and neighborhoods. This proposed project has the following goals: Goal 1 - To support the implementation of the Essential Tasks in diverse communities in which youth and families are facing Crisis Times, Goal 2 - To build a repository of examples for each of the Field Guide’s Essential Tasks, and Goal 3 - To establish and build a mentoring community of practice (CoP) of library staff working with youth and families to enhance staff skills in support of serving local communities in Crisis Times. Throughout this two-year implementation initiative, the overarching goal will be to collect data and insights in order to produce a new version of the *Field Guide*, such that it is a comprehensive, robust, and agile guide that reflects the changing nature of Crisis Times that communities may experience. This implementation-focused project directly addresses Goal 4 of NLG for Libraries (“Strengthen the ability of libraries to provide services to affected communities in the event of an emergency and disaster”; IMLS NOFO, 2021, p. 4). Specifically, this project focuses on meeting Objective 4.2 within this goal (“Support the implementation of such emergency and disaster management plans or otherwise enable libraries to provide appropriate services to affected communities in the event of emergencies or disasters”; IMLS NOFO, 2021, p. 4). We chose this goal and objective because in our prior work we found that libraries desperately needed guidance to provide community- and equity-based support to their communities during the COVID-19 crisis and such guidance was scarce. Through our PD processes in this implementation project, we will work with library staff nationwide to strengthen their ability to provide needed programs and services for Crisis Times, and develop a detailed implementation plan on how every public library in the U.S can support their communities in moments of need. Our previous work demonstrates that the best time for library staff to prepare to support communities in crisis is *before* a crisis emerges; hence, we will use a preparation lens in our work. That said, we will work with library staff in communities experiencing all junctures of Crisis Times as communities are regularly experiencing/recovering from crises and new crises are constantly emerging. All will come together to update and expand the Field Guide that can be used in future implementation of services and programs during Crisis Times.

Two terms used throughout this proposal require definition: crisis and equity. For our purposes, we define *crisis* as “an occurrence of natural catastrophe, technological accident, or human-caused event that has resulted in severe property damage, deaths, and or multiple injuries” (APA, 2020; Cline, et al., 2010, p. 2), and/or “a situation that produces significant cognitive or emotional stressing those involved in it.” In our work, we consider both natural (e.g., floods, fire) or man-made crises, such as war events (Cline et al., 2010; Harding, 2007), and both short (e.g., forest fire) and long and ongoing crises (e.g., the opioid crisis) (Vadivelu et al., 2018). We define *equity* as fair treatment, access, and participation so as to increase justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems and in their distribution of resources. (Equity Literacy Institute, 2022). Inequities often stem from historical, systemic marginalization of communities.

¹ Instead of using terms like minority, diverse, or of color, we use the term historically marginalized youth. Please refer to [our rationale](#) on why we chose this term. In this project, we define youth as school-age (ages 5 to 17), as per the definition offered by [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (n.d).

Project Justification

While almost all previous crises allowed the public library to continue some form of physical presence (e.g., community members use the library for electricity, heat, etc.; Bishop & Veil, 2013; Stricker, 2019; Wertman et al., 2018), the COVID-19 pandemic removed access to physical space, which libraries often exclusively rely on to connect with their communities (Subramaniam & Braun, 2021). Furthermore, 2020 was a year of multiple crises (including the COVID-19 pandemic and civic unrest) such that there was great need for community-based crisis solutions. Against this backdrop, in the summer of 2020, library staff were considering how to support their communities. Libraries across the country responded to the crises in multiple ways, from common responses such as virtualizing pre-existing services (e.g., storytimes, online lending/curb-side pick-up) to specific services focused on community needs (e.g., mental health services) and offering outside space for services (e.g., parking lot vaccination testing) (Adle et al., 2023; Banks, 2022; Braun & Subramaniam, 2020; Braun et al., 2021; Negron, 2020; Willcox, 2020). In many cases, libraries' crisis responses did not consider equity concerns; historically marginalized youth and their families who lacked reliable internet access or transportation could not access the services that were offered by public libraries (Subramaniam & Braun, 2020a). In order to better understand the successes and gaps in crisis responses, members of this project team (Subramaniam & Braun, 2020b) put out a call to library staff serving youth and families nationwide inviting them to come together to share their experiences and to design community-based crisis solutions. Through a series of seven 90-minute virtual participatory design (PD)² sessions with 137 library staff serving youth and families nationwide, we gathered information about how library staff were supporting their communities during the multiple crises of 2020. Our findings showed that public library staff aspired to support their communities but lacked guidance on how to do so when their library buildings were closed. As a result, staff rushed ahead to design ways to serve their communities, but these solutions were not optimal as they were developed without assessing needs and prioritizing community assets (Subramaniam & Braun, 2020a; Braun & Subramaniam, 2020; Subramaniam & Braun, 2021). These findings were confirmed by our review of the extant academic and practitioner literature published from March 2020 through July 2021 (Subramaniam & Braun, 2021); the key insight from this review and the PD work is that a lack of connection, communication, and engagement with the community is the greatest obstacle to the library staff providing optimal, equitable service and solutions in the crises of 2020, particularly for historically marginalized youth and their families. In addition to collecting information, the project team worked with participating library staff to co-design solutions with a focus on preparing and guiding them to support historically marginalized youth and their families during crises.

The lessons learned from this study led to the creation of the Field Guide, with four non-sequential and iterative Essential Tasks: (1) learn about the community, (2) co-create solutions with the community, (3) iterate and assess with the community, and (4) design structures for the community. Learning about the community includes the following focal points: mapping assets, gathering data about the community, starting conversations and building relationships with community members, and aspiring for collective impact. Co-creating solutions with the community focuses on planning, designing, and implementing PD sessions with and for youth and families, identifying big ideas and themes that emerge from these sessions, and developing programs and services from session learnings.³ Iterating and assessing with the community focuses on selecting/creating and administering assessment tools that measure the outcomes of the designed programs/services as well as using the results to revise and rethink those programs/services and share impact with communities. Designing structures for the community empowers library staff to prioritize community needs as they develop library policies, and to enable community members, staff, and administrators to make rapid modifications as needed during Crisis Times. These Essential Tasks highlight the need for all library staff to embrace a community-centered equity mindset, flexibility in library operations and decision-making, openness to change, and commitment to risk-taking. The Field Guide gives guidance and examples for how library staff can execute these tasks and adopt a Doing

² We use PD methods and its associated techniques to obtain feedback on the format and content of prototypes of solutions that were developed in partnership with our team (Druin, 1999, 2005). PD is an especially useful method for working with practitioners (in this case, library staff) as it provides insights that might otherwise be missed by our team; as Titlestad et al. (2009) noted, "a key PD principle is to bridge and blur the user-designer distinction from both directions, through mutual learning processes" (p. 31). PD is also referred to as co-design in the scholarly literature (Subramaniam, 2016).

³ When we used PD to work with library staff in the summer of 2020 to generate the Essential Tasks, it became apparent that co-creating with community using PD is a critical essential task as one of its strengths is enabling library staff to develop programs and services to serve communities in crisis by amplifying community voice.

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it With Others (DIWO) mindset. Since its online publication in winter 2021, the Field Guide has been accessed more than 21,200 times.

Since creating the Field Guide, our team has conducted two studies focused on evaluating the Field Guide’s efficacy in supporting libraries in Crisis Times: a survey study of 20 state library administrative agencies (SLAA), and a pilot virtual training program (facilitated by Subramaniam and Braun, with staff in Rhode Island and Massachusetts). Our analyses of these studies revealed three key insights. First, though this is at the core of all of the Essential Tasks, there is a need for better guidance on how library staff can build connections and partnerships with communities. Our studies showed that crisis-related services are still primarily designed and implemented by library staff *for* youth and families, instead of *with* youth, families, and community members (i.e., without evaluating community needs and priorities). Library staff do not know how or where to start getting to know their communities, often because of frail or nonexistent community partnerships and connections. Also, we found that there can be administrative impediments such that existing library structures (position descriptions, staffing models, administrative decision-making processes, policies, etc.) do not enable staff to connect with communities directly, making executing the Essential Tasks impossible. Library staff require support in working with library leadership to take small systems-related steps that will lead to successful implementation of the Essential Tasks. Second, library staff need guidance on how to provide equitable services to their entire community, including those that never enter the library. We found that library services are primarily focused on access to resources that are available *at* the library building. This highlights the library’s historic emphasis on serving communities that typically attend or visit the library and not on all communities, especially historically marginalized youth within the library’s service area. Indeed, almost all prior crisis-related work and guidance has been focused on providing solutions and support *at* the physical library (Bishop & Veil, 2013; Featherstone et al., 2008; Stricker, 2019; Wertman et al., 2018; Young, 2018; NLM, 2020). Finally, library staff need guidance on implementing the asset-based approach to creating and implementing services. Our studies showed that services are primarily centered on a needs-based framework (i.e., to “fix” the problems in a community) instead of an asset-based approach that builds on the community’s culturally-based practices and resources, skills and talents, and social capital and networks to develop services and programs (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Iruka, 2013; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). In addition to these specific insights about the gaps in guidance, it cannot be ignored that new crises are constantly emerging (Nuttall, 2022) and the impact of the crises vary from one community to another. Library staff need access to examples of how Essential Tasks are executed in diverse communities to increase their chances for successful execution of the Essential Tasks in Crisis Times.

In conclusion, though the current Field Guide serves as a good first step for preparing library staff to serve communities during crises, it only reaches the tip of the iceberg of crisis-related preparation. In recent months, Subramaniam and Braun conducted training on various topics that are relevant to the Essential Tasks (e.g., building relationships, PD, asset mapping) across the U.S. including California, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Washington, and found similar challenges exist for staff when implementing community and equity-based approaches to library services. Library staff need more and better support in order to meet the needs of their communities in Crisis Times.

Based on the findings described above, we have identified four objectives for the current project to meet the needs of library staff. The first objective is to build public library staff understanding of the needs and assets of local historically marginalized youth and families to prepare them to implement the Essential Tasks in an equitable manner as crises emerge (addressed by Goal 1). The second is to develop the unique skill sets (such as asset-driven approaches) necessary to work with local historically marginalized youth and families in Crisis Times to move beyond a focus on what is available in the library building (addressed by Goal 1). The third is to develop localized examples of how public libraries serve communities of historically marginalized youth and families in Crisis Times so library staff nationwide can adapt and customize their services with their communities (addressed by Goal 2). By building a repository of examples of implementing Essential Tasks to serve historically marginalized youth and families, this project will prepare library staff prior to crises, to respond to their community’s needs both during and after crises. Finally, the fourth is to launch a mentoring CoP that serves as a support system for library staff to co-learn the needed skills for designing and implementing solutions derived from the Essential Tasks through PD (DiSalvo et al., 2017; Druin, 2002), addressed by Goal 3. CoPs are powerful opportunities for learners to build skills through supporting each other in learning. This project’s team members have used the CoP approach for the IMLS funded [ConnectedLib](#) project (co-led by Subramaniam) and [Building Equity-Based Summers \(BEBS\)](#) (led by Braun).

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The proposed project fills a critical gap in the academic and practitioner literature, building on prior work from our team and more broadly. The study we conducted in 2020 was one of the first attempts to empirically analyze the challenges that public libraries faced during the COVID-19 crisis (Subramaniam & Braun, 2021) and resulted in the development of the Field Guide. In the proposed work, we will conduct an empirical evaluation and implementation of the Field Guide and use those insights to revise, expand and improve it. We will also build upon prior library scholarship and practices of creating and offering equitable services, in particular asset-based approaches in designing and implementing equitable services in general (IMLS-funded [Project READY](#), 2020; Stivers, 2022). This initiative will also expand on other IMLS-funded work that are crisis-focused such as the effort facilitated by the Seattle Public Library to investigate the mental health needs of teens in Crisis times, with the goal of designing services to meet those challenges ([CARING for Teen Mental Health](#) and [Creating Space for Teen Mental Health](#)).

The target group for this two-year project will be 20 teams from 20 states. Each team will consist of at least one SLAA youth focused staff member, at least one front-line staff member, and at least one administrator from a minimum of one library in each participating state (more details on recruitment and selection in the Project Design section below). Those selected to participate in the initiative will be invested in building skills in support of serving communities during Crisis Times. We expect at least 20 SLAA staff members, a minimum of 25-35 front-line public library staff, and at least 20 administrators will be engaged in the initiative.

In the short term, the beneficiaries of our project will be the target group mentioned above and their local communities of historically marginalized youth and families. In the long term, our Project Results (see section below) deliverables will include products and processes that will help public library staff across the U.S. prepare, with their communities, so that they are able to serve historically marginalized youth and families effectively during Crisis Times. Furthermore, the repository of examples that will be part of the revised Field Guide can serve as a complement to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's [Emergency Preparedness and Planning Resources](#) (CDC, 2022) and [Federal Emergency Management Agency's Resources for Emergency Managers](#) (FEMA, 2022), creating a broader, long-term impact from our work. For both the short- and long-term, we expect that historically marginalized youth and families will represent multiple groups in the United States that often are severely affected by crises of any kind (Chakraborty et al., 2019; Clark et al., 2020; Garg et al., 2020; Tai et al., 2021).

Project Work Plan

The following outlines the activities in this project. All activities will be completed virtually.

Implementation Pilot - Year 1 (Y1): August 1, 2023 - July 31, 2024

Recruitment and Selection: The project will be launched with a call inviting SLAA youth staff to apply to be a part of the implementation pilot cohort. COSLA and ARSL will support the invitation process by sending the invitation out through their networks and communications channels. As a part of the application process, SLAA youth staff will be required to designate a public library team from their state who they will work with on this project throughout its duration. The team will be made up of an administrator -- for example a branch manager or a youth services supervisor --- and a frontline youth-serving staff member. A team approach was selected for this work as our previous experience demonstrates that, for the Essential Tasks to be fully executed and embedded in library systems and structures, frontline staff and administrators must work together. Similarly, by being a part of the implementation team, SLAA youth staff will learn how the Essential Tasks are and are not implemented in libraries across their state and can offer Essential Tasks implementation initiatives, that they design themselves, in their own state in the future.

Using an application process (including a pre-screening survey and interviews), five states -- one team per state -- will be selected to participate. State library staff applicants will respond to a pre-screening survey in which they will be required to describe one or more crises that the participating library is currently facing or why they think it is important to prepare for future crises that their community may face (e.g., their service area is prone to forest fires or hurricanes, the unstably housed population is growing, etc.), how they currently connect with their community (or would like to connect with their community) to gain awareness of current or potential future crises, what the state library and local library have done to date to support affected communities, and where they see opportunities to support those in crisis. We will also ask applicants to describe their population with specific data and knowledge of historically marginalized youth in their

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communities -- youth of color, youth from low socio-economic backgrounds, unstably-housed youth, etc. – how the crises may have impacted these youth specifically, and the metrics they have used to determine the severity of the impact of the crises identified, specifically on the historically marginalized youth that they described. With pre-screening surveys in hand, the core project team will interview applicants who best meet the selection criteria to determine their understanding of crises and their impact on local communities, knowledge of the local library’s community, ability to participate fully over the two-year timeline, dedication of the team to the work, and commitment to equity. We will also ensure that different crises are represented in the selection. Based on survey responses and interviews, the five libraries will be selected by the end of the first quarter of Y1. See [draft of application information, sample application form, and a draft of the interview protocol](#).

PD Sessions, Library Staff Engagement, and Repository Startup: Following the selection of Y1 participants, the project team will begin the PD process with those selected. This process will include approximately eight 90-minute PD sessions hosted every two to three weeks in the second and third quarters of Y1. During these sessions, participants will have opportunities to engage with experts on topics included in the Field Guide. We will invite experts on equity, community engagement, equity-based decision making, co-creation, outcomes and assessment, and building equitable systems and structures to talk with the group at each session. Following the expert overview, participants will join together to work on PD activities such as developing a set of questions to ask community stakeholders to better learn about a community, building a vision statement focused on supporting communities during crises, identifying outcomes that center the assets of communities struggling during Crisis Times, talking with administrators about essential task work, and analyzing library policies that may have impact on moving the Essential Tasks forward through libraries (and participant libraries specifically). (See [this folder](#) for a sample of PD activities). Following each session, participating library staff (both front-line staff and administrator) will be asked to implement what they learned with their communities. This will give participants practice in working with historically marginalized youth and families and be their first step to support their communities. The project team will review all the artifacts created as a part of this implementation, provide feedback, and consider the potential for including the items in the repository of examples. Materials not selected at this stage to be included in the repository will receive feedback, and participating staff will be given the chance to resubmit for inclusion, after updates are made, in the repository in the second year.

Following each PD session, participating front-line staff and administrators will also be asked to reflect on their learning and submit a reflection form to the project team. The reflection will ask participants to discuss what their learning “aha” moments were, what they still have questions about, and what steps they would like to take next in order to bring the Essential Tasks to their libraries. These reflections will provide the project team with insights about implementation generally as well as the efficacy of the PD sessions and topics for CoP activities.

Community of Practice (CoP) focused on Mentoring: After the PD sessions are complete, the Y1 participants will begin to meet monthly (in the fourth quarter) in a CoP focused on ongoing implementation of these newly acquired skills and ideas. In these 60-minute sessions, library participants will discuss essential task implementation and mentor one another on successful skills and practices. Our mentoring model, [based on best practices set out by the University of California Diversity Office](#) (University of California, 2018) is critical to the ongoing success of the essential task work as it will empower and enable these teams to build competence and confidence in their practice. To build these mentoring practices in the CoP, we will facilitate mentoring training that will include discussions about the role of mentoring in this work and the challenges that participants may face when they take on a mentor role. This training will not only help Y1 participants work with their Y1 colleagues; it will also enable them to gain skills to serve as the core mentoring team for year-two (Y2) participants. The project team (with support from Y1 participants) will iterate the mentoring training for use in the Y2.

Field Guide Iteration: Throughout the Y1 PD process, the project team will continually reflect on the lessons learned in the PD sessions, the post-PD reflection forms, CoP engagement, and the artifacts that each team generates. With these in hand, the project team will review and iterate the Field Guide and provide opportunities for the Y1 participants to review changes and make suggestions for improvements. By the end of Y1, a revised Field Guide will be available for libraries joining the project in Y2.

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Y2 Library Recruitment and Selection: Based on learning in Y1, the project team will revise the protocols for recruitment and selection of Y2 participants. In the fourth quarter of Y1, the project team will put out a call for new states and libraries to join as participants. Like the previous year, the core project team will interview and select applicants who best meet selection criteria as described in the Y1 selection section above. COSLA and ARSL will again support the recruitment process by sending the invitation through their networks and communications channels. Through this process, 15 teams representing public libraries from 15 states (each with SLAA youth staff, a front-line staff member, and an administrator) will be added to the project during the final quarter of Y1.

Implementation at Scale and Dissemination - Year 2 (Y2): August 1, 2024 - July 31, 2025

Core Mentoring Team Leading Library Staff Engagement: The project team and the core mentoring team (Y1 participants) will implement a revised series of PD sessions (approximately eight sessions of 90-minute each) with the Y2 participants in quarters one through three. The project team will coach and support the core mentoring team throughout the process, by providing feedback on session plans and materials developed. By providing this leadership opportunity, participants will continue to build new skills that they can bring to work in their libraries and states long after the IMLS project ends. Similarly, Y2 participants will see how their colleagues and peers (Y1 participants) can move this work forward in innovative and powerful ways.

Growing the Repository of Examples: During Y2, the project team will continue to collect examples of the Essential Tasks using materials developed during PD sessions and in activities submitted following each PD session. Materials selected will demonstrate quality in implementing Essential Tasks and centering equity. Y1 participants (whose materials were not selected in Y1) will have the opportunity to revise submitted materials. By the end of Y2, the project team estimates that there will be at least 7-8 examples of each essential task from a wide range of libraries, crises, and communities. We will endeavor to include tribal, rural, small, suburban, and urban libraries and ensure that communities with historically marginalized youth and families are represented. The project team will develop a matrix that will note demographics of communities, crisis “type,” partners/assets leveraged, and Essential Tasks executed. This matrix will help the project team ensure that a diverse set of examples representing a variety of groups, crises, and communities is included in the repository. The matrix will also include a set of questions to identify how each task centers equity. For example, for co-creating solutions with the community, questions might include: Who is involved in developing the solution? Based on whose interests is the solution grounded?

CoP focused on Mentoring: In the fourth quarter of Y2, the project team and the core mentoring team will train the Y2 participants on essential task implementation mentoring. While these Y2 participants will not be able to mentor a new cohort as part of this project like the Y1 participants, they will be asked, in the application, to commit to essential task mentoring with at least one library in their state following the completion of this initiative. The project team will encourage each state’s SLAA staff to work with participating library staff in this mentoring work.

Final Field Guide: Throughout Y2 of the project, the project team will continue to iterate the *Field Guide* based on feedback from participating public library staff and state library administrative agency staff. The team will complete the revisions by the fourth quarter of Y2 and release the final Field Guide.

Dissemination: During the fourth quarter of Y2, the project team and library teams - from both Y1 and Y2 - will conduct four free webinars (each webinar focusing on a different essential task) that highlight the Essential Tasks, the examples developed by participants, the challenges and benefits of integrating Essential Tasks into crisis-related work, and successes libraries and states achieved through working with the Essential Tasks. Along with the webinars, the project team, with participants from both years of this implementation work, will submit articles on the work of this project to library journals such as Public Libraries Magazine, Young Adult Library Services, and American Libraries. Project partners will again assist in dissemination activities by publicizing the materials available through their networks and communication channels, and co-hosting the webinars. Our partners will also link to the project website from their own sites.

See Table 1 below for a summary of the project goals/objectives, activities, data sources and measured outcomes. Also see selected [sample data collection tools](#) that we have developed to capture the outcomes of this proposed project.

Y1 – August 2023 – July 2024 – Implementation Pilot			
Tasks	Activities	Data sources	Measurable outcomes
Identify challenges to implementing the Essential Tasks in support of communities in crisis (Goal 1 & Objective 1)	Semi-structured interviews with applicants	Interviews ; Application form responses	A typology of challenges to address in improving the Essential Tasks and supporting materials; List of participants selected to participate in Y1 CoP that represents different crises faced.
Identify strategies/tools for moving Essential Tasks forward in support of communities in Crisis Times and implement these Essential Tasks (Goal 1, 2 & 3, & Objective 2)	Two-part PD sessions: <u>Part 1</u> : Coaching by experts in the areas covered by the Essential Tasks <u>Part 2</u> : Implement Essential Tasks; Develop supporting materials and strategies using PD	All session recordings; Post PD reflections ; Essential task values checklist ; Artifacts produced during the PD sessions	Participating staff articulate the value of the Essential Tasks, and identify their community's specific needs; Strategies/tools identified to assist library staff to employ the Essential Tasks (e.g., checklist of things to consider before starting); Documents to support the implementation of each Essential Task (e.g., reflection questions to guide staff through the process).
Identify best practices for supporting communities during Crisis Times (Goal 1 & 2, Objective 3)	Iteration of the Field Guide and development of the Essential Tasks Repository	All the above-mentioned	Revised version of the Field Guide that includes 5-10 examples added to the Essential Tasks Repository
Support Year 1 participants in becoming mentors of the Essential Tasks to other library staff (Goal 3 & Objective 4)	Mentoring training sessions with Year 1 participants	Recordings of training sessions	Y1 participants demonstrate skills and techniques in mentoring; Y1 participants demonstrate increase in confidence in mentoring; Each participant delivers one draft of CoP session for Y2 to the project team
Y2 - August 2023 - July 2024 - Implementation at Scale and Dissemination			
Tasks	Activities	Data sources	Measurable outcomes
Identify challenges to implementing the Essential Tasks in support of communities in Crisis Times (Goal 1 & Objective 1)	Semi-structured interviews with Y2 applicants	Interviews ; Application form responses	A refined typology of challenges to address in improving the Essential Tasks and supporting materials; List of participants selected to participate in Y2 CoP that represents different crises faced.

Identify more strategies for moving Essential Tasks forward in support of communities in crisis and implement Essential Tasks in 15 additional libraries (Goal 1, 2 & 3, & Objective 2)	Two-part PD sessions: <u>Part 1</u> : PD sessions delivered by Y1 participants to Y2 participants <u>Part 2</u> : Implement Essential Tasks; PD sessions to plan their implementation of the Essential Tasks	Sessions' recordings; Post PD reflections ; Essential task values checklist ; Artifacts produced during the CoP sessions	Y2 participating staff are able to articulate the value of the Essential Tasks, and identify their community's specific needs; Additional strategies identified to assist library staff to employ the Essential Tasks; Additional documents to support the implementation of each Essential Task
Develop quality materials for dissemination (Goal 2 & Objective 3)	Iteration of the Field Guide and development of additional examples to include in the Essential Tasks Repository	Participants' feedback and reflections on experiences using the materials	Final version of the Field Guide that includes a minimum of 30 additional examples added to the Essential Tasks Repository. Each participating staff contributes at least two examples of implementing Essential Tasks with their community.
Support Y2 participants in becoming mentors of the Essential Tasks to fellow library staff (Goal 3 & Objective 4)	Mentoring training sessions with Year 2 participants	Recordings of training sessions	Y2 participants indicate that they are able to mentor other library staff; Y2 participants demonstrate skills and techniques in mentoring. CoP session plans
Support library staff across the United States to design services to prepare to serve communities during Crisis Times (Goal 1 & 2, Objective 1 & 2)	Produce and deliver webinars on employing Essential Tasks	Registrations for webinars	4 webinars 100 unique registrations at each webinar
	Survey webinar participants to collect feedback	Zoom poll results at the end of webinar ; Post webinar feedback survey	At least 80% of participants report that they plan to implement the Essential Tasks with their communities.
	Publish lessons learned and best practices from the project	Data collected throughout the project from project participants	3 articles published
	Track dissemination progress using data analytics (e.g., Google analytics)	Website statistics	200+ downloads of repository materials

Table 1 - Project sub-goals, activities, data sources, and outcomes

Project Team. The PI is Dr. Mega Subramaniam, the lead author of the Field Guide, who has successfully led the design and implementation of multiple professional development resources and training, including [ConnectedLib](#), [Safe Data Safe Families](#), [HackHealth](#), [Youth Experience](#), and [IMPACT](#). The co-PI is Nitzan Koren, a 3rd-year doctoral candidate at UMD.

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She is an instructional and document designer by training and the lead doctoral student working with UMD [KidsTeam](#) (an intergenerational PD team that designs technologies and programs for and with youth and families). Both PIs will lead the planning and implementation of the PD sessions, build examples of Essential Tasks, and make revisions to the Field Guide. As consultants on the project, Linda W. Braun (learning consultant at LEO) and Dr. Sandra Hughes-Hassell (Professor, UNC at Chapel Hill) will provide their expertise. Braun has extensive experience in designing and facilitating training for library staff such as the IMLS funded [Transforming Teen Services: A Train the Trainer Approach](#) and [BEBS](#) projects. A co-author of the Field Guide, she will lead the development and implementation of the CoP. Hughes-Hassell was the lead PI for IMLS funded [Project READY](#) and has extensive expertise in incorporating equity elements in library services. She will support the development of Essential Tasks and ensure that equitable practices are at the forefront of our work. Both COSLA and ARSL have committed to be partners on the project (see supporting documents for letters). They will assist in recruitment and dissemination activities throughout the project. We have commitments from the following to serve as advisory board members (see supporting documents for letters): Jack Martin, CEO, Providence Public Library will support work specifically related to partnerships; Beth Yoke, Chief Strategy Officer, Cincinnati Public Library, will provide expertise in community engagement and decision-making; Dawn LaValle, Director of the Division of Library Development for the Connecticut State Library, will bring a preparedness and futures perspective to the initiative; Karen Earp, Children Services' Coordinator, Somerset County Libraries (MD), brings her front-line crisis times experience to the project; and one yet-to-be-named member from each partner organizations (COSLA and ARSL). The project team will meet with the advisory board twice each year to obtain feedback on the implemented process and the products being developed.

Requested Funding. Funds are requested for: (1) salary and fringe benefits for the PI during the summer (\$24,450); (2) support for a graduate student (co-PI), including tuition, stipend, benefits, and fees (\$54,258); (3) contractual fees (\$19,000); (4) supplies (\$4,045) and (5) stipend for project partners, advisory board members, and librarian participants (\$59,000). In total, the cost will be \$249,999 for the project, including \$89,246 in indirect costs. There will be no cost sharing or sub-awards.

Diversity Plan

The motivation for this proposal is grounded in a commitment to providing equitable library services and programs during a crisis, by ensuring library staff work with historically marginalized communities before crises occur. The project team recognized, through their previous work, the lack of an equity lens as public libraries designed and implemented programs and services during the COVID-19 crisis (Braun & Subramaniam, 2020a, 2020b; Subramaniam & Braun, 2021). It became obvious that public libraries' traditional focus on equality instead of equity did not allow for serving communities in a sufficient manner.⁴ When libraries focus on equity, "everyone gets what they need to thrive no matter their identity or zip code" (Hughes-Hassell, 2020, p. 3). We will foreground equity at every stage of our work, using the definition of equity included at the beginning of this proposal. In our recruitment efforts, through our partners, we will recruit and work with library staff from urban, rural, and suburban communities to build skills in serving historically marginalized youth – youth of color, low socio-economic status, unstably housed, LGBTQ+, immigrant and/or refugee, and others. Additionally, our partner, ARSL will also be able to work with SLAAs to encourage them to recruit public library staff serving rural youth. The advisory board members for this project were carefully selected because of their past experiences working with diverse libraries and/or communities. Through the questions in the application (which we will seek input on from our partners and advisory board members), we will also learn about the communities that our applicants are currently working with or recognize the need to work with. We will ask applicants to explain their understanding of crises and their impact on local communities, knowledge of their local community, and their commitment to equity. We also understand that crises have different impacts in different communities such that equal solutions will not be proposed; instead, equity will be the tenet in forming solutions (Chakraborty et al., 2019; Clark et al., 2020; Garg et al., 2020; Tai et al., 2021). Hence, we will be looking for such variation to be represented in our selection of participants. PI Subramaniam has demonstrated success in doing such recruiting for the [ConnectedLib](#) and [IMPACT](#) projects (both IMLS funded). Our commitment to equity is evident in all aspects of the project design. The use of PD techniques itself provides our participants an opportunity to voice and define the challenges that they and their communities are facing (see

⁴ Equality means everyone gets the same resources, same treatment, and same opportunities, resulting in fairness. Disparities experienced by the various social and economic structures that are prevalent in our communities are further exacerbated when libraries simply focus on equality.

Subramaniam et al., 2021) and implement the Essential Tasks in an equitable manner. The Essential Tasks, which center on learning about the community and co-creating with the community, have tools and steps that allow participants not to lose sight of equitable practices (e.g., asset mapping, starting community conversations, PD techniques, etc.). During each of the CoP PD sessions, we will begin by reminding participants to use the following two questions to foreground their work: (1) To what extent does your conception of equity in libraries boil down to providing access to library resources and services and in what ways may that reinforce existing power structures? (2) What might equity in library services look like beyond access? Consultant Hughes-Hassell, will advise participants and the project team to focus on these questions throughout our work. She will also ensure that the examples developed for the repository center equitable practices, with the ultimate goal of other libraries “seeing themselves” in the Essential Tasks and the final Field Guide. The project design also requires participating library staff to co-create programs and services (an Essential Task) with historically marginalized communities using PD to ensure that community members are involved in defining the challenges and opportunities available in their communities to prepare for crises. In our dissemination efforts, through our partner networks, we will target library staff working with historically marginalized youth across the country and will be conducting webinars to reach library staff that often cannot afford to attend conferences. We will also have these recorded webinars on our website, so that staff that could not attend can view them later (especially those from smaller libraries that cannot get time off to attend these webinars). Our goal in the dissemination efforts will be to underscore the importance of preparing to serve communities even before a crisis happens by paying attention to communities that will most likely be affected during a crisis to ensure equitable practices rather than simply providing the same services to everyone.

Project Results

This project will support a national and immediate need to build the capacity of library staff to implement Essential Tasks to serve historically marginalized youth and their families during current and future crises, with a commitment to equitable and asset-based approaches. Project results include: (1) a repository of new illustrative examples that will be appended to the [Field Guide website](#); (2) final versions of PD session plans that detail how to engage and guide library staff in the learning and execution of each of the Essential Tasks, which can be adapted by staff to execute the Essential Tasks with their communities; (3) a CoP focused on mentoring that will center on approaches for providing equitable practices and services during crises and will yield publications and presentations on the topic; (4) a group of trained mentors that can lead, coach, and help implement Essential Tasks to prepare public libraries to support communities in crisis in their respective states long after the IMLS project ends and, (5) a revised and improved Field Guide. Library preparation programs can also integrate all these deliverables into their curricula. We will assure that our results are adaptable, generalizable and usable and usable to other institutions and communities nationally as follows. Results (1), (4), and (5) ensure that the federal investment reaches beyond just the target group for this project and extend gains to more beneficiaries. Furthermore, results (2) and (3) are imperative to advancing knowledge and understanding of how public libraries can serve youth and families during crises, allowing other public library staff to replicate or customize the approaches to executing Essential Tasks relevant to their community assets. Through our work, public library staff across the nation will be prepared to serve historically marginalized youth and families equitably during crises. Ultimately, this *preparation* (“ready now”) lens will lead to long-term impact demonstrated by communities thriving before, during, and after crises. We will sustain the benefit(s) of our project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance as follows. All deliverables (available on our project website in downloadable PDF and editable/reproducible Google slides, documents, and spreadsheets) can be used by library staff nationwide to rethink their preparation to serve communities before and during upcoming crises, moving towards the mindset of the library as more than a physical building. All project outcomes (including the Field Guide, the repository of examples, and the recorded webinars) will be sustained beyond the project duration on the project website through technology support provided by UMD. The project team will maintain a Slack channel to continue to support the CoP beyond the project duration.

Year 2

August 2024 - July 2025 - Implementation at Scale and Dissemination

	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
<i>Year 1 participants will work with project team to revise PD sessions and schedule PD sessions with year 2 participants</i>	█	█										
<i>Year 1 participants and project team will run PD sessions with year 2 participants</i>			█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
<i>Schedule mentoring sessions with year 1 participants</i>	█											
<i>Advisory board member meetings</i>		█						█				
<i>Collect and provide feedback on essential tasks artifacts (produced during PD sessions from year 1+2 participants)</i>			█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
<i>Develop a matrix of essential tasks</i>								█	█	█		
<i>Plan and schedule mentoring sessions for Year 2 participants</i>									█			
<i>Conduct mentoring sessions for Year 2 participants (together with year 1 participants)</i>											█	█
<i>Iterate the Field Guide and develop additional Essential Tasks</i>	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
<i>Plan and run webinars</i>								█	█	█	█	
<i>Write and submit articles of lessons learned and best practices</i>					█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
<i>Send post-webinars surveys to participants</i>											█	
<i>Analyze feedback from post-webinar surveys and Zoom polls</i>												█
<i>Track dissemination progress</i>								█	█	█	█	█

Type	Availability	Access	Sustainability
<p>Website and YouTube channel - which will host the Field Guide and associated materials, videos associated with the Field Guide, and webinars</p>	<p>The project team will host all deliverables (downloadable Field Guide, and associated word documents, spreadsheets, slides) online on the Reimagine Libraries website (developed as part of previous unfunded work). All downloadable documents will be in file formats: pdf, .docx, .pptx, xlsx. Recorded videos and webinars will be hosted in the UMD iSchoolYouTube channel that will be linked from the Reimagine Libraries website. For ease of copying and editing, our downloadable materials will also be available via a public Google Drive folder and associated Google applications such as Google Doc, Google Slides, and Google Sheets.</p>	<p>The website and materials are accessible and free to all library staff nationwide and the public. All resources will be licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial International license (CC BY-NC). This license will encourage wide and flexible adoption of our tools and resources by allowing others to remix, tweak, and build upon them non-commercially and use them in their existing professional development contexts, provided they credit project personnel and license their new creations under the same terms.</p> <p>Recorded videos and webinars will include links to downloadable text-file transcripts of the video/webinar.</p>	<p>The website and materials will be hosted on UMD web servers and sustained beyond the project duration through technical support provided by UMD to host the website, Field Guide, and the associated materials. Our partners will also provide a link from their website to our website.</p>
<p>Participatory design session plans</p>	<p>The participatory design session plans which will be shared widely for adoption and customization by other libraries will only have the session details (activities, design goals, etc.) without any personally identifiable information. Downloadable session plans and associated materials will be in file formats: pdf, .docx, .pptx, xlsx. For ease of copying and editing, our downloadable materials will also be available via a public Google Drive folder and associated Google application such as Google Docs, Google Slides, and Google Sheets.</p>	<p>The participatory design session plans are accessible and free to all library staff nationwide and the public. All resources will be licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial International license (CC BY-NC). This license will encourage wide and flexible adoption of the session plans by allowing others to remix, tweak, and build upon them non-commercially and use them in their existing professional development contexts, provided they credit project personnel and license their new creations under the same terms.</p>	<p>All participatory design session plans will be hosted on UMD web servers and sustained beyond the project duration through technical support provided by UMD.</p>
<p>Repository of Examples of Essential Tasks</p>	<p>Examples of applying the essential tasks would be available on the project website but would not include any identifiable information (unless permitted by the</p>	<p>The materials are accessible and free to all library staff nationwide and the public. The research team will only make available the aggregated information shared by participants</p>	<p>The repository of examples of essential tasks will be hosted on UMD web servers and</p>

	library and participating community members) to protect the identity and privacy of communities or participants. In addition, to protect the intellectual property of communities, the project team will attribute the knowledge shared and contributions made to the community members involved.	that are involved in the implementation of the essential tasks to protect the identity and privacy of young people and their families. Examples will be shared on the project website, without any personally identifiable information, unless libraries choose to include their library and library staff names.	sustained beyond the project duration through technical support provided by UMD.
Slack and a Google Drive shared folder.	The Slack channel will allow participating library staff to connect with other staff members, share materials, and ask questions. Materials shared on Slack will be automatically removed every 90 days as per Slack’s terms of free use. The research team will download and upload shared materials to a shared Google Drive folder to save files for future references.	The Slack channel will be open to only library staff participating in Year 1 and Year 2 of the project. These messages are only accessible to the project team and participating library staff as this platform will be used to discuss challenges experienced by their communities and lessons learned as they implement the essential tasks. A link to the Google Drive shared folder will be accessible via the Slack channel to participating library staff.	The project team (through UMD) will maintain the Slack channel and the Google Drive shared folder to continue to support the community of practice (CoP) beyond the project duration.
Artifacts collected through interviews, reflections, participatory design sessions, and mentoring session plans.	These artifacts with identifiable information will only be available to the project team and will be anonymized if used in publications and presentations (unless permission to use name, library name, and/or affiliation is obtained from the creator of the artifact).	Access to artifacts is limited to the project team members.	Artifacts will be kept for five years, as per the requirement of UMD’s Institutional Review Board.

For the digital content materials that we have indicated above that will openly available online, we will make all digital content accessible via standard web browsers. Care will be taken to ensure the site and its contents will be accessible and navigable in mobile browsers. Metadata used on the website will be periodically reviewed by the PIs, including at least annually after the grant period of performance, and will update terms and the metadata schema as needed to ensure the site continues to be useful and navigable.

The University of Maryland iSchool is strongly committed to advancing research and education in the areas of youth librarianship and will continue to support the maintenance of, and provision of public access to, products resulting from this project well after the grant period of performance. UMD’s iSchool retains an experienced IT Services team with an excellent track record of supporting PIs in maintaining long-term public access to research and education products.

Organizational Profile

University of Maryland

Mission:

The University of Maryland College Park is a public research university, the flagship campus of the University System of Maryland, and the original 1856 land-grant institution in Maryland. The University of Maryland is dedicated to achieving excellence as the State's primary center of research and graduate education and the institution of choice for undergraduate students of exceptional ability and promise. With a commitment to diversity of faculty, students and staff, the University advances knowledge, provides outstanding and innovative instruction, and nourishes a climate of intellectual growth in a broad range of academic disciplines and interdisciplinary fields for the benefit of the economy and culture of the State, the region, the nation and beyond.

Service Area:

The Fall 2022 enrollment was 40,792, a total of graduate and undergraduate students. 44% of the population are minority students. 35.816% of students come from out-of-state and 64.184% are Maryland residents. The University serves the state of Maryland as a premier research institution and reaches national distinction as ranking among the very best of public research universities in the United States.

College of Information Studies Maryland's iSchool in the Information Capital

Mission:

The College of Information Studies, Maryland's iSchool, engages in collaborative, interdisciplinary, and innovative research, teaching, and service. We educate information professionals and scholars, and we create knowledge, systems, and processes.

Service Area:

The iSchool offers Master's degrees in Library Science (MLS), Information Management (MIM), Human Computer Interaction (HCIM) and a doctorate degree in Information Studies. Per most recent admission data, 301 students are enrolled in the MLS program, 77 enrolled in the MIM program, 141 enrolled in HCIM program and 85 enrolled in the doctoral program.

iSchool also offers Bachelor's degrees in Information Science (BSIS), Social Data Science (SDSC), and Tech & Info Design. Per most recent admission data, 1,561 students are enrolled in the BSIS program, 28 enrolled in the SDSC program (inaugural cohort), and 7 enrolled in the InfoDesign (inaugural cohort) program. Approximately 43.73% of the total student body is female and 26.20% are underrepresented students.

The iSchool has 53 tenured & tenure track faculty, 34 professional track faculty, 43 adjunct faculty, and 65 staff members representing diverse subject areas in information studies. The iSchool serves the mid-Atlantic region.