

## **Get Ready, Stay Ready: A Curriculum for Community Collaboration and Civic Discourse**

In this Implementation Project proposal, Dr. April M. Dawkins, University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and Dr. Lucy Santos Green, University of South Carolina (USC), in partnership with [EveryLibrary](#), [Penguin Random House](#), and [EBSCO Information Services](#), request \$244,277 from the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian program for a three-year project resulting in the design of a professional development micro-credential curriculum for public, academic, and school library workers. Aligned with IMLS agency-level Goal 1 “Champion Lifelong Learning,” and LB21 program Goal 3, “enhance training...to meet needs of communities,” the Get Ready Stay Ready Curriculum for Community Collaboration and Civil Discourse (GRSR) will equip participants to build strong civic networks that bring together different community constituencies, interests, and populations in mutually beneficial relationships for proactive support of diverse library services and collections.

**Project Justification.** Civic engagement is the cornerstone of democratic society. Through it, “people contribute to their communities in meaningful, productive, and sustained ways”<sup>1</sup>. Historically, libraries played a key role as anchor institutions that promoted civic engagement through services, programs, and targeted communication efforts – specifically through the development and delivery of diverse library services and library collections. The library’s fulfillment of its role as a facilitator and community advocate through these programs and services benefitted from the institution’s large store of public trust. In 2017, 78% of U.S. adults credited libraries with helping them “find information that is trustworthy and reliable”<sup>2</sup> with Black respondents reporting a level of trust at 83% and Hispanic adults a level of 87%<sup>3</sup>. Unfortunately, the social disruption brought on by a political landscape where misinformation is amplified through divisive rhetoric, further exacerbated by the isolation of a global pandemic and irresponsible social media infrastructure, significantly drained librarianship’s trust account with the U.S. public. Libraries now face a growing public demand to tackle challenging or controversial issues, heal community wounds, and help their stakeholders embrace community change. Their efforts to “create an environment in which people of all ages and from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds feel they have a voice, a role, and a valued place in their communities”<sup>4</sup> are met with distrust, ignorance, and fear-based program/material challenges<sup>5</sup>. While there are multiple resources available that address community building, engagement, and public challenges; materials, trainings, and toolkits on these topics have been developed with a reactionary lens in place. Consequently, library workers typically apply these resources in a reactive manner, once a financial or material challenge and/or protest occurs – missing out on the opportunity to lay groundwork that would minimize the impact of such challenges in the first place. In addition, the reactive design of these resources relies on already overwhelmed librarians to not only oversee organizing and leading any challenge-response efforts, but cobble together last-minute community support. GRSR will prepare library workers to proactively develop collaborative, long-term community relationships through a collection of trainings on key topics not typically addressed in LIS graduate school curriculum including: delivery of effective education of community members on library processes and procedures; civic discourse, critical conversations, and de-escalation; public relations and marketing for diverse programs and collections; and communication skills for consensus building with library friends, trustees, volunteers, parents, and educators. Modeled after the IMLS-funded [Project Ready](#) effort, GRSR uses the nationally acclaimed [Get Ready Stay Ready Toolkit](#) as a powerful model and foundational collection of community engagement resources, introducing its step-by-step application through an open-source, powerful and accessible curriculum, adaptable to each library’s unique geographical and sociological context.

Project Goals are: **Goal 1.** Develop a fully online, self-paced, exportable, and platform-independent curriculum and suite of professional development trainings introducing current best practices for community collaboration and civic discourse in support of diverse library collection development and programming. **Goal 2.** Expand the curated [Get Ready, Stay Ready Toolkit](#), caption all media, and translate into Spanish, French, Chinese, and Arabic to maximize toolkit accessibility and applicability as a foundational component of the GRSR curriculum design. **Goal 3.** Disseminate the curriculum widely to schools and libraries serving diverse populations across the country through partner organization digital ecosystems (EveryLibrary, Penguin Random House Publishing, EBSCO Information Services), pre-conference workshops,

a series of national webinars, and a micro credentialing platform hosted and accredited by UNCG. **Goal 4.** Recruit and train an initial cohort of library workers interested in adapting the GRSR curriculum for their local library system's use.

**Proposed Work Plan.** Year 1 (Fall 2023): Complete translation and expansion of existing GRSR Toolkit. Develop all curriculum content. Year 1 (Spring 2024): Submit first draft of curriculum package to Advisory Council for review and critique. Create platformed example of curriculum suite, and all exportable materials and components. Year 1 (Summer 2024): Beta test GRSR with representatives from target market (school, public, and academic library workers from rural, suburban, and urban systems). Finalize curriculum package and prepare for launching. Year 2 (Fall 2024-Spring 2025): Set up and finalize optional micro-credentialing infrastructure. Share GRSR through partner digital ecosystems. Contract amplification team and plan/ present four webinars on GRSR curriculum package. Year 2 (Summer 2025) Recruit and train initial cohort of library workers interested in adapting GRSR curriculum for local use. Year 3 (2025-2026) Present pre-conference workshops (e.g. COSLA, RUSLA, PLA, TLA, LibLearnX), expanding number of GRSR trained individuals nationwide.

The project team includes: [Dr. Dawkins](#) (Co-PI): Assistant Professor of LIS with expertise in intellectual freedom, youth services, school librarianship; [Dr. Green](#) (Co-PI): Professor of Information Science with expertise in instructional design, adult learning, online pedagogy. [S. Collins](#) (Content Development): Curriculum & Research Coordinator at Simmons Univ. Library. [B. McQueen](#) (Content Developer): Former public librarian, Student Services Librarian, Miami Univ.-Hamilton. [A. Harper](#) (Content Developer): lawyer with expertise in community organizations. [S. Neal](#) (Content Developer): lawyer and middle school librarian. Advisory Council: [M. Hull](#) (public library system director), [A. Brown](#) (author, school librarian), [T. D. Robinson](#) (community college assistant director of library services), and [T. Magnusson](#) (community leader, parent).

**Diversity Plan.** The GRSR curriculum package helps librarians bring together different segments of their community, building consensus and support for diverse programs and collection development. GRSR will be exportable, platform-independent, and adaptable so that users can tailor it to their unique contextual settings, addressing specific community and library structure needs (including multilingual resources and captioned media). It will also be available as a free, micro-credentialed training through UNCG for systems and individuals that need institutional credit for professional advancement. Content designers bring expertise not only in different library fields (e.g. school, public, academic, rural, urban), but in personal and professional perspective, and population services including BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, Accessibility Services, ESL, and first-generation immigrant populations. Finally, the proposed budget supports the development and initial GRSR training of a critical mass of library workers from varying library systems, geographical regions, and library specialties through three methods (expanding financial access as much as possible): webinars, pre-conference workshops, and targeted online training.

**Project Results.** This project aligns with LB21 program Goal 3 "enhance the training and development of the library and archival workforce," by equipping library workers to develop collaborative community relationships in support of diverse programs and collections. The GRSR curriculum package will provide library systems with a flexible, research-based, field-tested professional development that can be adapted and implemented nationwide. All materials will be made freely available online under a Creative Commons license for access, adaption, sharing, and implementation as needed. Its construction as a multilingual, captioned, platform-neutral and exportable series results in an immediately usable package requiring minimal revision. For those requiring institutional accreditation or continuing education credit, UNCG's micro-credential infrastructure delivers a ready-made option. The project will create a critical mass of library workers able to employ tools and techniques acquired through GRSR and effect proactive change within their communities. LIS educators can adapt and implement GRSR materials, expanding professional preparation and growth in newly credentialed library professionals.

**Budget Summary.** The estimated total project budget is \$244,277 (d+i). Personnel: \$41,366 for PI salary and fringe; Travel: \$20,000 travel costs for 5 pre-conference workshop development targeting school, public, and academic librarianship; Student Support: \$20,475 for a Graduate Assistant; Subaward: \$25,000 for University of South Carolina; Other Costs: \$67,450 to include advisory board stipends (\$8,000), curriculum expert stipends (\$16,000), webinar presenters (\$5,600), participant stipends (\$10,500), and services related to translation, accessibility and web hosting/development (\$27,350); Direct Costs: \$174,291; Indirect Costs: \$69,986.