

Pathways to Leadership Preliminary Proposal – September 2022

Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) seeks an implementation grant to 1) develop library leaders among its staff by offering a scholarship program for non-librarian staff from groups underrepresented in the library and archives field to pursue a master's in library and information science (MLIS) degree and 2) create a framework and resources that other library systems can use to develop diverse library leaders (IMLS Goal 2, Objective 2.1). The Pathways to Leadership scholarship covers the entire cost of an MLIS program at Queens College or can be applied towards the tuition of other local or online programs. BPL will provide scholars student support services including mentoring and professional development. Resources developed will target libraries seeking to support leadership development among current and future staff with a focus on groups underrepresented in librarianship. The total three-year project cost is \$727,181, of which BPL is seeking \$410,000 from IMLS; \$317,181 will be contributed by BPL as cost-share. Partners include Queens College and BookOps. Through Pathways to Leadership, BPL is advancing diversity, equity and inclusion within the field of library sciences by investing in historically underrepresented staff and providing them the opportunity to expand their career options. Over the three-year project period, sixteen scholars will earn their MLIS with ten scholars supported by IMLS funding and a publicly accessible webpage will be created that provides structural support best practices, training modules and information on creating a scholarship program.

**Project Justification:** In the summer of 2020, four organization-wide “Real Talk” sessions were held for all BPL employees to discuss how the institution can better live up to its values of diversity, equity and inclusion. Participants noted a lack of diversity among librarian staff and the data bears out: as a group, librarians at BPL are much less diverse than the borough they serve. Only 38% of BPL public service staff with MLIS degrees are Black, Latino, Asian, Native American, Middle Eastern/North African or Pacific Islander, compared to 64% for the population of Brooklyn. Nationally, the field of librarianship is remarkably homogenous – 84% of American librarians are white.

While BPL cannot singlehandedly diversify the field, the institution is determined to better represent the communities it serves and provide a model to other library systems. At this time, the only scholarship programs for non-librarian library staff are offered by larger networks and associations including the Alaska State Library and ALA. Pathways to Leadership will give BPL staff the experience and credentials needed to pursue librarianship opportunities while also creating a model for other library systems on ways to provide similar educational opportunities that support leadership development for staff in all stages of their careers, as well as future librarians enrolled in MLIS programs. This work aligns with IMLS Goal 2, Objective 2.1 by increasing BPL's capacity to provide opportunities for staff to develop as leaders in the library and archive field and specifically to implement meaningful organizational change that addresses diversity, equity and inclusion.

With funding from BPL's former Board Chair, Pathways to Leadership launched in summer 2021 and the first cohort of five scholars began classes in spring 2022 with one additional scholar beginning in fall 2022 (this scholar was funded through a private donation). The application process is underway for a second cohort of five scholars, who will begin classes in spring 2023. BPL is seeking support from IMLS to support five scholars from the second cohort and five additional scholars (10 total). Private and public support will provide scholarships to sixteen staff. By demonstrating the demand and success of the program, as well as creating professional development tools that are relevant and impactful to library systems of all sizes, BPL will be able to use this leadership funding to leverage additional support to sustain the program over the long-term.

**Project Work Plan:** Over the grant period, BPL will provide sixteen staff members with MLIS scholarships and create a robust set of professional development tools. This work will be led by a dedicated Scholarship Program Coordinator and include:

*Partnerships:* BPL will collaborate with Queens College and BookOps to strengthen the program., as well as develop partnerships with other graduate programs such as University at Albany and University at Buffalo. College partners will help recruit applicants by leading information sessions about their degree programs and working with BPL to identify opportunities for additional student supports such as academic and career advisement, membership groups and academic support. BookOps, BPL's technical services provider, will provide mentorship to scholars focused on collection development and cataloging.

*Scholar Selection & MLIS Program Enrollment:* A selection committee will be formed that consists of staff from diverse backgrounds and with different roles at BPL who are librarians and/or have leadership experience, and who have a deep understanding of the requirements and commitment needed to successfully complete the MLIS program. Once a final selection of Pathways to Leadership scholars is made in late summer/early fall, BPL will work closely with the cohort on their graduate program applications with the goal of having all new cohort members begin classes in January. It is expected that students will begin classes in spring and take two years to complete the required thirty-six credits (6 courses a year).

*Student Support Services:* Supports will include a writing class, mentorship provided by BPL colleagues in other departments and staff at BookOps, job shadowing, core competency trainings, panel discussions, membership in ALA and attendance at one of ALA's annual conferences. A dedicated weekly newsletter will be sent to scholars to share what is happening at BPL and in the

library and archives field. Paid education days will be provided to scholars managing their existing work commitments with coursework. BPL's goal is to provide scholars with a supportive, flexible experience that recognizes individual needs.

*Professional Development Resources:* A publicly accessible webpage/website will be created that shares information on the Pathways to Leadership scholarship program as well as resources that libraries can use to support leadership development among all staff as well as future librarians. Resources will include information on implementing mentorship and library trainee programs; a list of barriers staff/students have encountered in their work or schedules and best practices for accommodating them; training modules focusing on topics such as managing people, core competencies and mentoring; and a toolkit for launching a staff scholarship program featuring information including financial assistance, application support and tutoring.

*Evaluation:* BPL will assess the success of the scholarship program through surveys and regular one-on-one conversations with scholars, mentors, staff being shadowed and guest speakers. Assessment information will be shared with project staff, Human Resources and BPL leadership with changes made to the program as needed to better support scholars and ensure that all are able to successfully earn their MLIS degree. The program will also be evaluated based on the number of scholars who move into librarianship or archival roles. Feedback on the professional development resources will be gathered through outreach to other library systems and feedback from users with information on the webpage will be updated as needed.

*Dissemination:* BPL will share the Pathways to Leadership program and related resources with library systems nationally by participating in networking events, presenting at conferences and publishing articles about the program in publications such as Library Journal. In 2023, BPL hopes to have the program coordinator and scholars present at ALA's Annual Conference. At ALA, and in general, the Library will meet with staff at other library systems across the country to share experiences building and implementing the program, as well as program content including training modules, study support materials and mentorship ideas to encourage other systems to implement similar initiatives.

**Diversity Plan:** In 2020, an internal Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Council was formed and includes staff representing a range of experiences, perspectives, and positions. The Council and Pathways to Leadership were established following the aforementioned Real Talk conversations and as such share a common priority to diversify librarianship at BPL and support staff from traditionally underrepresented groups. The program will recruit diverse candidates including but not limited to Black, Latino, Asian, Native American, Middle Eastern/North African and Pacific Islander members of BPL staff who aspire to earn MLIS degrees. The selection committee will be comprised of staff with diverse backgrounds and experience.

This project will strengthen the field's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by providing sixteen library staff with MLIS degrees that will increase professional employment opportunities in the library and archives field, as well as by creating a set of resources that support leadership development in the field that focuses on supporting groups underrepresented in the field. It is anticipated that library systems will learn from BPL's scholarship model and develop their own internal scholarship or leadership development programs. As patrons see more diversity in library professionals, they will be more likely to pursue an education and career in library services.

**Project Results:** By the end of the grant period, 16 BPL staff will have earned their MLIS (10 funded through IMLS), and a dedicated webpage/website will be created that features resources for supporting leadership development more broadly. The program will establish Pathways to Leadership as a feasible staff development model that has significant impact on an individual's career trajectory, organizational capacity and the communities served by BPL. Results will be essential as BPL looks to build a sustainable model that can be adapted by libraries with a range of resources and funding. The scholarship component of the program can be adapted to fit a range of organizational and fundraising budgets while also providing resources that support libraries with no capacity for providing financial support but that could address other barriers such as scheduling. The leadership development tools will require few financial resources and adapted to the needs of individual library systems. While some BPL scholars will enroll in programs that take place in-person, others will take online programs which are available to staff nationally. BPL will share the model and results with library systems, providing technical assistance as requested, reducing the individual implementation and adoption costs to separate library systems.

**Budget Summary:** The cost of Pathways to Leadership over three-years is \$724,481 (Cost share \$314,481; IMLS request \$410,000). Personnel (Scholarship Program Coordinator 100% FTE, Manager of Learning & Development 15% FTE) \$368,148 (BPL cost share \$240,896); Travel to ALA conferences for the Scholarship Program Coordinator \$4,500; Promotional items for scholars (branded tote bags, t-shirts) \$5,000; Student support costs are \$287,168 and include tuition/application and registration fees (\$258,118), textbooks (\$2,500), writing workshop (\$2,000), two-year ALA membership (\$1,000), ALA conference registration (\$6,750) and travel expenses to one conference per scholar (\$16,800) (BPL cost share is \$50,290); Special events for scholars such as panel discussions and luncheons (\$6,000); indirect costs at 8% \$53,665 (BPL cost share \$23,295). Of the \$410,000 IMLS request, student support costs are \$236,878; \$173,122 are the additional costs.