

## **Lead From Where You Are**

### **Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant Proposal**

**Introduction:** The Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives aims to empower library professionals and trustees to confidently excel as leaders through the “Lead From Where You Are” initiative. The project addresses issues that were identified through extensive collaboration with partners and stakeholders which include high turnover rates, influx of new personnel, and challenges in managing library materials and services. Library professionals and trustees need resources to help them navigate these changes at the state and local levels. The passage of legislation affecting libraries in Kentucky and other states further warrants the development of training focused on library governance, stakeholder collaboration, accessibility enhancement, advocacy, and communication skills. Our initiative will support and encourage library personnel to lead from where they are regardless of their current position or job title, bolstering confidence and skills to traverse obstacles facing libraries. The project will culminate in an online interactive Library Leadership Course tailored for new library personnel. KDLA will collaborate with esteemed consultants from the University of Kentucky School of Library and Information Science and other partners to develop coursework content. To amplify our project’s reach, we will extend a subaward to the Kentucky Public Library Association (KPLA), working closely with them to orchestrate 12 in-person trainings for library staff and trustees. A Trustee Toolkit will also be made available through the KDLA website to provide essential information, training materials, and an interactive self-assessment tool that will prepare library personnel and trustees to work together as a cohesive board and organization. Project training and resources will empower library personnel and trustees serving 120 library systems across Kentucky to lead effectively, regardless of their current position or experience. KDLA requests a \$249,000 Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Program – Implementation Grant with no required cost share to assist with this initiative.

**Project Justification:** Our KDLA team works closely with Kentucky public library directors and trustees and participates in several state and national organization committees. Through communication with these partners, we have ascertained that comprehensive training is needed in several areas. Kentucky public libraries, much like our counterparts in other states, have experienced a surge in turnover rates that has resulted in an influx of new personnel, many of whom are unfamiliar with established library practices and are ill-prepared for leadership roles. These trends were the focus of discussions at recent Southern Council COSLA and IMLS Grant Coordinator quarterly meetings. This project addresses this critical need by offering cross-disciplinary training opportunities for new and emerging leaders to develop library management and leadership skills that support community-centered library services. In 2022, Kentucky’s public libraries experienced a threefold increase in material challenges compared to the preceding year, mirroring national trends. KDLA consultants have noted a marked increase in requests for guidance on managing persistent material and service challenges. Training provided through this project will equip library staff and trustees with strategies to navigate these obstacles while ensuring continued accessibility to vital materials and services. Policies and procedures also need to be updated to reflect these changes and to accommodate a growing number of new library board members or trustees. The passage of SB167 in 2022, made changes to the trustee appointment process allowing county judge executives to appoint new library board members. Consequently, many new trustees have been appointed who have limited experience with library operations and are unfamiliar with common library values and accepted standard library practices which has resulted in increased miscommunication and conflict. Training will emphasize stakeholder collaboration to improve conflict management and resolution capabilities. Considering other states are also experiencing legislative shifts regarding library trustee appointments, our training proposals hold timely relevance and applicability beyond the borders of Kentucky. KDLA understands that there are a variety of topics that everyone from front-line staff to board members needs to do their jobs well and provide important services to the community. Many other programs exist but some are only available to in-state participants or training is limited to certain topics. Training provided through this initiative can be rolled out through the Southern Council of COSLA, but ultimately used by any library anywhere.

**Work Plan:** KDLA will begin this initiative by designing and administering a comprehensive discovery survey to identify knowledge gaps, gauge interest in training topics, and gather ideas for new training opportunities for library personnel and trustees. Administration will be facilitated through Survey Monkey and be widely publicized through KDLA listservs, monthly newsletters, the KDLA website, social media, and partnering organizations. Once the survey is administered, KDLA staff will analyze survey results and create a priority profile. The grant team will audit training resources available through KDLA’s training portal and other resources to avoid duplicating training. An advisory council consisting of staff, library directors, trustees, educators, and contacts from library organizations such as COSLA and ARSL, will be created to review survey results and recommend course curriculum and training topics. The grant team will develop a comprehensive work plan delineating project goals, objectives, activities, and timelines to guide effective communication, implementation, and evaluation.

All training will be available in a freely accessible portal currently hosted by the agency. KDLA will enlist subject-specialty consultants from the University of Kentucky School of Library and Information Science and other organizations to develop content for the Leadership Development Course. Consultants, KDLA’s Training Development Specialist, and an Intern will work together to prepare

new content for the course that will mirror other online leadership programs and may emphasize topics such as stakeholder engagement, change management, communication skills, conflict resolution, financial management, and more. KDLA's Training Development Specialist and Intern will design learning modules that will be easily accessible for those at all digital skill levels. The course will employ interactive elements, including role plays, to encourage active learning and problem-solving. Evaluation tools such as pre and post-tests will be used to assess learners' progress. Participants will complete a survey upon completion of coursework to provide feedback on the coursework's effectiveness and design. Additional surveys will be conducted to understand the long-term application of knowledge obtained through the coursework.

KDLA will additionally collaborate with the Kentucky Public Library Association (KPLA) to organize and execute at least 12 in-person leadership trainings, integrated with the KPLA-sponsored annual and quarterly regional conferences. These sessions will be accessible to all library staff and trustees in Kentucky. Regional training sessions will occur once a quarter in different regions of the state and will address immediate challenges libraries are facing. Training content will be delivered in a variety of ways focusing on interactive opportunities and resulting in the ability to build peer-led cohorts for their regions. Evaluation of in-person training will take place through onsite surveys, follow-up interviews, and online measurements to ascertain the quality, utility, and feedback for future continuing education topics.

Internal staff will also develop an online user-friendly Trustees Toolkit to revamp current resources and provide detailed training targeting library governance, stakeholder collaboration, accessibility enhancement, advocacy, communication skills, and navigating local and state government. Articles, guides, checklists, templates, and links to additional training resources will be provided through the toolkit. Evaluative tools will be provided so they can measure their library's performance against established key performance indicators. Evaluation of the toolkit's effectiveness will be conducted through analytics, surveys, and focus groups provided by experts of the agency and partnering organizations.

Ongoing promotion of training opportunities and resources will ensure the project's success. A communications plan will be prepared and used to market the availability of training resources. Current tools, such as social media, newsletters, meetings with partners, other training events, and state and national library association events and poster sessions, will provide the means and opportunity for promotion and publicity. KDLA staff serve on professional committees, often presenting at local and national conferences, which will allow the grant team to announce the project, communicate ongoing efforts, and share project results. To disseminate additional findings and recommendations, the grant team will write at least one piece to be published in a scholarly journal of management, administration, and/or library science, such as the *Journal of Library Administration*.

**Project Results:** The "Lead From Where You Are" initiative is poised to make a transformative impact on the library landscape. In the Commonwealth of Kentucky alone, an estimated 2,200 library staff and 500 library board members will directly benefit from this initiative; however, the project's reach extends far beyond state borders. Unrestricted access to virtual training and online resources will be available to an estimated 400,000 library workers across the United States. Participants will gain a better understanding of library core values and acquire a robust set of leadership skills and competencies that will aid them in their efforts to create dynamic library services, curate inclusive collections, and foster welcoming workplaces. Trustees, the cornerstone of effective library governance, will emerge equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide strategic oversight, ensuring the libraries they serve operate with the highest standards of excellence. Empowered library directors and trustees will excel in establishing and nurturing stakeholder relationships which will lead to amplified community support, enriched partnerships, and augmented resources for their respective libraries. In turn, libraries will experience heightened public engagement that will signify a more representative approach to serving the diverse needs of their communities. Ultimately, the project's legacy will be the cultivation of a sustainable leadership culture within libraries. This enduring focus on excellence, adaptability, and community responsiveness will stand as a testament to the enduring impact of "Lead From Where You Are" It will ensure that libraries continue to serve as vibrant, vital hubs of learning and community connections well into the future.

**Budget Summary:** (Wages/Benefits) KDLA has allocated \$40,000 to hire a part-time eLearning intern to assist with coursework development. (Subawards/Stipends) A subgrant of \$45,000 will be extended to KPLA to help cover venue expenses, equipment rentals, supplies, and speakers for KPLA-sponsored annual and quarterly regional trainings. Additionally, \$10,000 has been earmarked for stipends to support advisory committee expenses. (Supplies) KDLA has set aside \$19,000 for supplies and costs involved with marketing, grant management services, and website development. (Contracts) To ensure the development of high-quality training. \$100,000 has been allocated for engaging consultants. (Other) \$25,000 has been reserved for costs associated with KDLA's learning portal. An estimated \$10,000 has been set aside for data assessment, evaluation, and analysis. The total budget for the project is \$249,000 with no cost share.