

LSTA

Library Services Technology Act

Strength in Families: Fostering Family Engagement in the Community

Grant Amount:
\$10,000

Time Range:
1 or 2 years

Eligibility:
Public Libraries

Staff Contact:
Shelley Quezada
shelley.quezada@mass.gov
1 800-952-7403 ext. 235

Summary:
Develop a systematic approach to family engagement



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Based on the principles outlined in *IDEABOOK: libraries for families*, this grant would encourage libraries to create or build on existing partnerships with community organizations that share a similar mission. This includes schools (private, public, academic), local museums, early learning systems as well as community agencies that provide family support: e.g. health and nutrition, mental health, special needs, and early intervention. A key element in this effort would be to elevate the family voice in designing services to those previously underserved in their communities. This would include groups with one or more risk factors such as:

- Households without English speakers
- Low-level parental education
- Unmarried parents
- Teen parents
- Transitional residential mobility
- Unemployed parents
- Incarcerated parents
- Housing and food insecurity

Using the IDEABOOK as a framework, the library will provide leadership that includes cultural competency as part of staff capacity development and work with identified community partners to engage and provide guidance by creating welcoming spaces and technology access. Through this grant, libraries should:

1. Create programs and offer services that create family engagement both within the library and outside including non-

traditional locations such as health centers, playgrounds, parks, farmers' markets, and other local gathering spaces.

2. Promote libraries as a resource for families to find information and services in education, job and housing searches, health and well-being, and social networking.
3. Create intentional partnerships with parents who will work with neighborhood associations and civic and community support organizations in support of high-needs children and families.

Based on a community self-assessment, this effort would address the development of programs and services that might effectively reach a previously underserved audience. By fostering an expansion of knowledge, skills, and self-awareness, it will identify institutional barriers that have previously affected family participation and begin to implement changes during the grant year.*

BACKGROUND

Today's children are significantly shaped by families and the communities in which they live. It has been observed that nutrition, health care, safe learning spaces, and enrichment can all affect children's learning outcomes. Children who find the least support in their home, peer, and community experiences face the most severe challenges in school. Community organizations including libraries offer important opportunities for growth and development in informal settings. For this reason, libraries must be part of a collaborative approach to assist families to thrive. According to a recent IMLS study, 36% of children having the lowest socioeconomic status visited libraries in their kindergarten year, compared to 66% in the highest. Unfortunately, too many children and families designated "high risk" are disconnected or unaware of library programs and services.

According to the recently released Public Library Association *IDEABOOK: libraries for families*, libraries have increasingly become the educational, technological, and social hub of the community. Family engagement, which is about building relationships with families, is a critical component of this evolution. IDEABOOK offers libraries a way to move beyond thinking of family engagement as random, individual activities or programs, but rather as part of a system where library leadership, resources, and events are linked to goals. The framework represents a theory of change that builds a pathway for meaningful family engagement beginning in the early childhood years and extending through young adulthood. DESE has also provided a new

[Family Engagement Framework.](#)

*Design online programs that showcase collaborative opportunities among schools, early education and care, other community organizations, and families to support children's transition to school.

Provide families with training and support that build their skills and competencies to engage around child development, learning, health, and well-being (both virtual and in person)

Support staff involvement with community groups/organizations and families they serve that highlight library role in pathways for family engagement (both virtual and in person)

October 2020