

Librarians Build Communities
Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program

Abstract

Participants in the proposed project seek to prepare forty-five students to be public librarians with expertise in community building, thereby strengthening community support for public libraries in Georgia, addressing Georgia's shortage of librarians, and providing a model for other states. The Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS), a unit of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, will serve as the lead applicant. The state library agency will collaborate with the Valdosta State University (VSU) Master of Library and Information Science program to prepare students for professional positions in public libraries with a focus on community building. Each qualifying student will receive a full in-state tuition scholarship to the Masters degree program (MLIS) at VSU to complete the 39 semester-hours required for graduation. Students will be expected to complete the program by the end of the grant period.

Skills in developing and maintaining community partnerships and securing "a place at the table" will be required for the next generation of public librarians. VSU is prepared to offer curriculum content to meet this need by recruiting part-time faculty to focus on public libraries and community building. GPLS will assist with this effort by offering an advanced public library seminar with a focus on community building during years two and three of the grant period. A pre- and post-assessment administered to scholarship recipients will measure changes in community building attitudes, knowledge, and skills as a result of the program.

Applications will be reviewed and participants selected by a committee that includes representation from GPLS, VSU, and the Georgia public library community. Students will be selected based on potential for successful graduate study, interest in public library community building, and commitment to work in a Georgia public library for a period of 3 years following graduation. Students will be required to maintain at least a B (3.0) average in order to receive continued funding.

Although not part of the project during the grant period, the project team plans to conduct a follow-up study in 2017 to assess the longer-term outcomes of the deployment of librarians with community-building competencies.

A total of \$680,327 in grant funds is requested for this program, including \$520,673 (or 77%) for direct student support. The total project budget is \$844,647, with \$164,320 in matching funds from GPLS and VSU. The project period is July 2009 through June 2012.