

ABSTRACT

Making It REAL! Recruitment, Education, And Learning: Creating a New Generation of Librarians to Serve All New Yorkers

Recruiting and educating the next generation of librarians to enhance diversity in the profession and serve diverse populations requires a bold and imaginative plan—a plan that can effect fundamental change in recruitment and education for librarianship.

The New York State Library, 13 library systems, and New York State's schools of library and information science have formed a partnership to carry out such a plan. Together they will create model Teaching Libraries and scholarships to recruit and educate professional librarians, cultivating a diverse new workforce that is well prepared to serve community needs, especially those of diverse groups and special populations.

The project components, for which the partners request \$995,630 over three years, are as follows:

- Thirteen library systems, partnering with six library schools, will collaborate in Teaching Libraries across the state. The library systems will provide practical, hands-on experience for librarian recruits in a Teaching Library selected from among the systems' member libraries.
- Six of New York's ALA-accredited library schools will participate in a scholarship component. The scholarships will enable the schools to recruit students who will represent diverse groups and acquire competencies for serving diverse populations.

In addition, the project partners will initiate activities to strengthen library education overall, enabling all MLS degree candidates to benefit. Activities include construction of a career website; implementation of a public-relations campaign to reach out to diverse populations and raise statewide awareness of the project; annual meetings of recruits and project participants; and publication of project experiences and outcomes.

The grant will provide financial support to 44 MLS students. It will contribute to developing and testing model Teaching Libraries and support a rigorous evaluation process that will complement the Outcome-Based Evaluation Implementation Plan of the State Library. It will also assist in building statewide resources to enhance workforce recruitment, including the career website, the public-relations initiative, and the events for participants.

Applicants for scholarships will agree to work in U.S. libraries for a specific time after earning their MLS degree and return annual surveys on their career progress.

The New York State Library and an Advisory Group representing different types of libraries and regions of the state will oversee project activities and administration. They will support the activities outlined above and develop plans and alternatives for continuing the project after the three-year grant period.

New York State will contract with an expert evaluator who will lead the overall evaluation of this project. The evaluator selected must have had extensive experience with library and educational projects and be proficient in outcome-based evaluation (OBE) to ensure that results will be clear and measurable. In addition, the participating library systems and library schools will perform their own evaluations of their project components, using OBE and guidelines provided by the State Library.

The project partners and New York's library community are optimistic and excited about the promise of this project for the future of librarian recruitment. We envision both short-term and long-term success:

- New York State and the library profession will experience an infusion of recruits from diverse backgrounds who are ready to serve diverse populations.
- The recruitment process will become stronger with the development of new strategies and alternatives for library education.
- Teaching Libraries will identify new competencies and skills for librarians serving diverse populations and traditionally underserved groups.
- Library systems and library schools will build strong partnerships and develop new means of collaboration.
- New means of communication will enhance recruitment and career placement.
- The library community and all those served by libraries will achieve a heightened awareness of recruitment needs for the 21st century.