2021 APPLICATION

Title of Project (Limited to <u>50 characters</u>, including spaces, using Arial 12-point font):
NAME OF PROJECT: SIDEWALK SERVICE & VIRTUAL VENTURES

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: <u>**MARCH - JUNE 2020**</u>
(Must have been **fully** implemented **for a minimum of** at least one year - on or before July 1, 2020)

☐ **CHECK HERE IF THIS PROJECT IS BEING SUBMITTED FOR THE *COVID-19 IMPACT AWARD* ONLY.** (Projects must be implemented on or before December 31, 2020. **Note**: Projects implemented less than one year ago will not be eligible for any other PQA awards. In addition, once a project is submitted, you cannot submit the same project for awards consideration in subsequent years).

PROJECT STATUS: **X** Ongoing   _____ One-time only

HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT?   _____ Yes   **X** No

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Describe the project in <u>15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font</u>. State clearly and concisely what difference the project has made.

1 When libraries closed in March 2020 due to COVID-19, LA County Library quickly pivoted,
2 developing digital and contactless services that enhanced and expanded communities'
3 access to essential services. The Library launched a new Digital Library Card, allowing
4 those without existing cards to access digital resources, like eBooks, music, movies, and
5 classes. A new systemwide Virtual Programming strategy retooled under-utilized
6 communication tools (Webex and YouTube) to deliver impactful and cohesive digital
7 programs, similar to those conducted in-person. While these online services became a
8 vital lifeline for customers, the Library also saw the need to serve those impacted by the
9 digital divide. Sidewalk Service offered safe, contactless pickup at libraries, allowing
10 customers to safely enjoy the Library's resources and services at home—particularly
11 important for those who rely on libraries to connect to educational resources and
12 economic recovery services. Together, these new models represent not just a quick and
13 effective response to the pandemic, but a framework to continue these service delivery
14 models into the future, increasing accessibility of Library service to all Los Angeles County
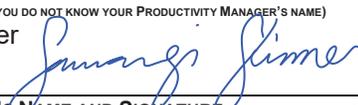15 residents. **Please consider for the Customer Service Award.**

BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED **ANNUAL** COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED **ANNUAL** COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED **ANNUAL** REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) = TOTAL **ANNUAL** ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
$	$	$	$	☒

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS LA County Library, 7400 E. Imperial Hwy, Downey, CA 90242	TELEPHONE NUMBER (562) 940-8400
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME Deborah Anderson EMAIL DAnderson@library.lacounty.gov	TELEPHONE NUMBER (562) 940-4187

PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME) Samangi Skinner	DATE 6/23/2021	TELEPHONE NUMBER (562) 940-4106 EMAIL sskinner@library.lacounty.gov
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE Skye Patrick	DATE 6/23/2021	TELEPHONE NUMBER (562) 940-8400

==****ELECTRONIC, WET, OR SCANNED SIGNATURES ARE ACCEPTABLE****==

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1st FACT SHEET – LIMITED UP TO 3 PAGES ONLY: Describe the **challenge(s), solution(s), and benefit(s)** of the project **to the County**. What quality and/or productivity-related outcome(s) has the project achieved? Provide measures of success **and specify assessment time frame**. Use Arial 12 point font.

CHALLENGE: LA County Library has always provided vital information, experiences, resources, and essential support services for Los Angeles County residents, tailored for unique populations with the most need. In 2019 alone—its last full year of regular service—the Library circulated over 9.72 million items, welcomed over 9.75 million customers through its doors, and issued over 153,000 library cards. Over 18,900 in-person programs engaged about 583,000 customers in a wide range of topics and services across 85 locations. When libraries had to close due to COVID-19, many customers were cut off from these critical Library resources that support and enrich their lives. With County residents experiencing the untold effects of the pandemic—record unemployment, logistical and emotional distress of balancing learning and working from home, loss of social connection, and major shifts in ways of life—the Library felt it necessary to reimagine its services to address emerging customer needs, as well as new pandemic-related issues. How could the Library adapt its core services and continue serving the public during this unprecedented time despite limited resources, limited time, and a staffing shortage?

SOLUTION: When COVID-19 shifted many activities online, it became clear the Library's digital services would become an important resource for existing customers, along with those who might be new to the Library. A ***Digital Library Card*** had been in discussion for some time, but had hit barriers in the past. How could it be easily integrated with the Library's customer database? How could addresses be verified?

Plans were fast-tracked and staff worked quickly to build-from-scratch an effective solution for large-scale distribution of *Digital Library Cards* with an easy-to-use registration form on the Library's website, launched before the end of March 2020. To start, staff manually entered new cardholders into the Library database and, within months, the entire process was integrated, automating the generation of new Digital Cards using a custom code and triggering emails to customers, streamlining the workflow for staff on the backend. The *Digital Library Card* allows County residents ages 18 and over to receive immediate, unlimited, and free access to the Library's online resources, including eBooks and audiobooks, movie and TV streaming, online classes, and informational databases. The Library also enabled a digital card feature in OverDrive, it's primary application for eBook and audiobook lending, that allowed customers to sign-up directly within the app and borrow digital materials with ease.

The next question was how to address programming, normally offered in-person, for all ages, at all libraries. Children's Librarians took their storytelling skills to the digital space. *Virtual Storytime* was launched in March 2020 and streamed twice daily on Facebook Live in English and Spanish.

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Then, in April, staff began by rethinking roles and assessing skills, bringing together a cross-division working group to retool existing technology—a recently-established YouTube channel and an under-utilized Cisco Webex platform—which have become integral to delivering programming. Swiftly developed from the ground up, this full-scale *Virtual Programming* strategy was new territory. After a short turnaround time for research and development, programming guidelines and standards were created, along with subcommittees for live and pre-recorded programs. Teams were trained on technologies, best practices and workflows, and are continuously adding new trainings as higher-end equipment and software are acquired, and improved methodologies are developed. Live and pre-recorded programs cover a wide range of topics for all ages—from STEAM, to cultural history, to book talks—with specialized resources that focus on workforce development and student support. Crafting, artmaking, guest speakers, and other enrichment programs supplement at-home learning and reference Library resources for extended exploration. This initiative was later expanded to allow individual libraries to host their own virtual events for local audiences, including community groups like book clubs and *Dungeons & Dragons* meetups, helping participants maintain close social connections with librarians and each other, while serving their unique and respective communities.

Perhaps the most difficult question was how to resume services in-person for those impacted by the digital divide, or those who simply missed picking up library books. As important as access to digital resources was to residents, maintaining a connection to the local community was equally important. Library leadership evaluated available staff—about 30% of Library staff were on DSW assignments—and closely reviewed current health and safety guidelines to figure out how to resume the borrowing of materials while ensuring the safety of staff and customers. In June 2020, the Library launched *Sidewalk Service* at 24 locations, allowing customers to place holds on physical library materials using the online catalog or by phone. Once their held items become available, they are notified, and can pick up their materials during business hours using a contactless procedure, similar to retail stores. It was gradually expanded to 80 locations (nearly all open libraries), as staffing permitted. Sidewalk Service also helped to enhance the Digital Library Card. Digital cardholders are permitted to place holds on and borrow 3 items at a time, encouraging digital users to also become in-person users.

BENEFITS: The digital and grab-&-go services that were developed during the pandemic allowed the Library to continue serving its communities safely and effectively. These innovative approaches provided more convenient delivery of the supportive Library resources County residents rely on.

The popularity of the *Digital Library Card* has shown the need for greater access to online resources in an increasingly digital world, with over 62,200 digital cards issued since inception, and an additional 42,000 plus issued on the OverDrive app—over 100,000 total. Since issuing digital cards, online service usage has increased 300%.

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Staff remain responsive to customer needs, using feedback to improve the digital card interface. With the infrastructure in place, the *Digital Library Card* can now continue to be offered, making Library resources accessible to populations where a physical library card may be inconvenient or inaccessible.

With virtual programs, the Library discovered an effective and accessible new approach to fill gaps in programming. Since **Virtual Programming** began, over 900 programs and videos have been created with nearly 258,000 participants, views, or interactions to date, with more being added daily. Programs offer different engagement and learning styles, a strategy that enables staff to cover a large breadth of content, and service diverse populations. Customers can access programs they otherwise would not have been able to if the program was hosted at a single physical location. The impact of a single program is magnified, given unlimited reach, with little to no cost, as the initiative pivoted existing resources and leveraged staff skill sets. Virtual Programming has also paved the way for community-based and governmental partnerships in developing, presenting, and promoting programs, establishing a model for future opportunities; partnerships included The Homestead Museum, NASA JPL, The Music Center, and many more. Virtual Programming has also helped create a cross-departmental workflow and platform that can evolve into the future, formalizing leadership and project management training that otherwise would not have existed.

Almost immediately after implementation, **Sidewalk Service** similarly showed that this type of increased access filled a need for customers as they were staying Safer at Home. In just the first 8 weeks of the program, over 181,000 items were borrowed at the 46 Sidewalk Service locations available at the time. In an average week, 30,000 holds were circulated as compared to 39,000 in the previous year—meaning, 80% of the business was done at only 50% of libraries, indicating a demand for physical materials. Customers, particularly those who lack regular or reliable internet connectivity, were able to access a vast collection of physical books, DVDs, CDs, and other materials for school, work, personal enrichment, and entertainment. In addition, staff were able to utilize their unique interpersonal skills to stay connected to their communities, adding bookmarks and flyers for Library or County resources, or decorations and words of encouragement to holds packages awaiting pick-up. Safe delivery of physical items offered a sense of normalcy for customers and staff alike, contributing positively to social and emotional well-being. To date, over 3 million items have circulated through Sidewalk Service, and even with libraries now reopened to the public, the service remains available.

Overall, these new virtual ventures and Sidewalk Service are new models that will continue to exist in the near and distant future. They helped staff use under-utilized resources, learn new skills, and adapt public service to a changing world.

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<u>**Linkage to the County Strategic Plan – 1 page only**</u>. Which County Strategic Plan goal(s) does this project address? Explain how. <u>Use Arial 12-point font.</u>

<u>GOAL II. FOSTER VIBRANT AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES</u>
Strategy II.2.2 – Expand Access to Recreational and Cultural Opportunities
These initiatives were developed specifically to expand access to all County residents and enhance already established services. All three initiatives use different tactics to connect to County residents and offer multiple touchpoints to recreational and cultural opportunities through books and other materials, digital resources, and public programming. Using different modes of marketing to outreach these programs to the public, the Library was able to reach more areas and address different levels of need across diverse County populations. All these programs also help connect residents to multiple Library and County resources, helping customers discover additional opportunities to improve their lives.

<u>GOAL III. REALIZE TOMORROW'S GOVERNMENT TODAY</u>
Strategy III.1.1 – Develop Staff Through High Quality Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Training
Fostering greater collaboration and cross-training across divisions was pivotal in bringing these programs to fruition, establishing new models for future projects. Leveraging cost-effective training tools and staff skill sets, these projects allowed staff to explore beyond industry standard professional development and adapt skills from other disciplines for their work. From computer code to video production, health and safety practices in other sectors to marketing across the digital divide, the Library broke new ground on how to quickly and effectively train staff in new skills.

Strategy III.2.2 – Leverage Technology to Increase Visibility of and Access to Services
Both the Digital Library Card and Virtual Programming tapped into existing technology for new uses. Program managers worked closely with IT and technology vendors to innovate adaptations to current systems and interfaces. These solutions are what led to the ability for the digital card form to connect directly to the customer database, so that residents that were new to the Library could access online services. Exploring the entire suite of available Cisco Webex tools, as well as new tools for video production and editing, enabled the Virtual Programming team to broadcast live programs and high-quality pre-recorded content across the County to a wide audience that was connected to Library and County services. Not only were these technologies useful for these applications, but they can now be reimagined for future programs to increase visibility and access to Library services.

Please consider this application for the Customer Service Award.

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<u>COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY)</u>: If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. Please indicate whether these benefits apply in total or on a per unit basis, e.g., per capita, per transaction, per case, etc. You <u>must</u> include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation. <u>Use Arial 12-point font</u>

Cost Avoidance: Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these are costs to the County or to other entities.

Cost Savings: A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these were expenditures by the County or by other entities.

Revenue: Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

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