

Quality and Productivity Commission
34th Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program
“Leading with Excellence”

2021 APPLICATION

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12-point font):

NAME OF PROJECT: EQUITY EMPOWERS: iCOUNT REDEFINES LIBRARY SERVICE

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: AUGUST 2016

(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: Ongoing One-time only

HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT? Yes No



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

1 LA County Library's equity initiative, *iCount*, ensures the Library makes a conscious
 2 effort in designing services and programs that address the complex needs of the
 3 diverse community it serves, including customers of different ages, genders, sexual
 4 orientations, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, physical abilities, nationalities, legal
 5 statuses, and more. With 85 unique locations, the Library has always designed
 6 programs with local communities' needs in mind, but addressing equity head-on
 7 required a new strategy. In 2016, *iCount* set out to develop a cohesive plan for uniting
 8 staff in the intentional development of more equitable service delivery models to reduce
 9 barriers and increase opportunities for under-resourced populations. Staff trainings were
 10 developed to help supervisors and managers educate staff on equity, explore and
 11 discuss related issues like implicit bias, and create and implement annual Library Equity
 12 Action Plans (LEAPs). Each LEAP gives Library staff the opportunity to create or
 13 redesign a service or program at the local level to better serve a chosen demographic,
 14 resulting in the development of over 100 programs, annually. **Please consider this**
 15 **submission for the Changemaker & Community Inclusion Awards.**

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
\$	\$	\$	\$	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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: Many Los Angeles County residents are desperate for life-altering opportunities. Measure of America’s study, *A Portrait of Los Angeles County*, used three key indicators in its Human Development Index (HDI)—Health, Education, and Economy—to assess the well-being of County residents. Scores varied so widely by community that the report divides LA into 5 different counties: Glittering LA, Elite Enclave LA, Main Street LA, Struggling LA, and Precarious LA. The last two categories are home to more than half of County residents—over 5 million people. These residents do not enjoy the same access to opportunity or levels of well-being as inhabitants of the first three areas; they lack high school diplomas, struggle for jobs, often live in poverty, and are reliant on public transit. These areas have the highest concentration of youth 18 and under, who often attend under-resourced schools and have a greater likelihood of developing learning disabilities.

They also happen to comprise of the communities where the majority of LA County Library locations are based, indicating an opportunity for greater depth of service, helping to bridge some of these equity gaps. In addition to profiling high-needs areas, the report also identifies countywide trends, including quickly-growing populations—those experiencing homelessness, older adults, and foreign-born residents. With 85 library locations covering a 300,000 square mile service area, it is no question that communities served by LA County Library have varying needs. While libraries have always designed offerings with local communities in mind, the Library wanted to find a centralized, systemwide strategy for addressing equity. As public servants, librarians are constantly adapting their traditional role to bridge service gaps and meet changing needs, but this was big—how could a library system take this on?

SOLUTION: The *iCount* equity initiative was conceived in 2016, after Skye Patrick became Library Director. Committing the department to breaking down barriers and increasing access for all, Patrick aimed to more equitably serve the County’s vast and increasingly diverse population—not just in terms of race and ethnicity, but also age, sexual orientation, gender identification, socioeconomic status, physical and mental ability, and more. Equity extends beyond equality (fairness and universal access) to deliberate, intentional efforts to create service delivery models that assure community members have the resources they need. To accomplish this, the Library needed a planning team. The voluntary *iCount Leadership Committee* is comprised of 20 staff across divisions, working alongside Patrick to develop *iCount*’s three key objectives:

1. **Train staff.** Inequity and implicit bias are tricky issues—often sensitive and emotionally-charged, they require ground rules and safe spaces. After establishing a foundational understanding of core topics, the Library would train its trainers, relying on supervisors to facilitate smaller conversations throughout the system.

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2. **Break down a complex issue into bite-sized pieces.** The Library would leave it up to each library or division and their local expertise, to identify an inequity and create or revise a program to better serve that identified group.
3. **Reevaluate systemwide initiatives.** While many programs already sought to reach underserved demographics, leadership would refocus using an equity lens.

iCount was first introduced to staff at the Library’s Staff Development Day in August 2016. Simran Noor, Vice President of Policy & Programs for the Center of Social Inclusion, delivered the keynote. Emily Weak from Oakland Public Library addressed the perspective of “white librarianship” and the profession’s staggering statistics. Breakout sessions with multiethnic and multigenerational professionals encouraged staff to reflect on what more they could do to serve underrepresented communities.

In May 2017, a train-the-trainers event was held for the Library’s 200 supervisors, who would go on to become facilitators for discussions within their divisions. Speakers included Arnold Chandler of Forward Change Consulting who spoke on a Life Course Framework for Improving the Lives of Young Men of Color, and representatives of the Los Angeles LGBT Center’s RISE Project, who spoke on Gender Equity as well as Creating Safe, Supportive Libraries. An Equity Training Toolkit provided a facilitator’s guide with tips for effective small group communication on cultural competency, making the most of “hot moments” in conversations, and addressing sensitive topics (e.g., exploration vs. fault-finding.) The Toolkit also laid out the timeline for the year:

- **Jul 2017:** Training 1 – Laying the Ground Rules for Discussion
- **Aug 2017:** Training 2 – What is our Current Experience in the Library?
- **Sep 2017:** Training 3 – What Can We Do to Support Equity?
- **Oct – Nov 2017:** Training 4 – Library Equity Action Plan (LEAP). Staff picks *one* equity issue to address and formalizes a plan to address it, defining the issue, creating a timeline, and developing anticipated outcomes & measurements.
- **Dec 2017 – Jan 2018:** LEAP implementation period.
- **Feb – Jun 2018:** Submit LEAP progress report (Feb) and final report (Jun).

After a successful first year and the creation of 103 LEAPs, the Library kept a similar framework/timeline for 2018 and beyond. Each year would begin with reviewing the previous year’s LEAP—*How well did it address an equity issue? What were some of the successes and challenges? What impact did the LEAP have on the community? Did we meet our anticipated outcomes? What will the long-term impact be?* Implicit bias became a key theme. Staff were invited to take a private, anonymous implicit association test from Harvard University’s Project Implicit. LEAP highlights were featured in case study videos, produced by Library Marketing, to inspire future plans.

BENEFITS: Equity is a difficult concept to measure, especially in terms of gradual improvements. But in terms of meeting program objectives, *iCount* has been a resounding success. Over 100 LEAPs have been conducted annually, representing 85 libraries plus all support staff teams (e.g., facilities, marketing, human resources) and localized equity improvements are thriving. Because each plan is unique, quantitative

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data like program attendance or customers served cannot be totaled comprehensively. However, annual reports on LEAP successes allow the Library to develop case studies for replication, which are shared with staff. Highlights of populations served include:

- **Older adults (25% of LEAPs):** Libraries added workshops on computers and eBook checkouts; expanded large-print collections; hosted social mixers, movie screenings, and board game play; and expanded outreach to senior centers.
- **Customers with intellectual or physical disabilities (15% of LEAPs):** Art activities, Storytimes, and programs for all ages were developed, including a *Differently Abled Adults Reading Club* and an *All Abilities Children’s Concert* series. IT made plans to improve accessibility hardware and software in libraries.
- **Non-native English speakers (15% of LEAPs):** Libraries added computer literacy courses, book clubs, and ESL conversation clubs in Spanish and Chinese. West Hollywood Library expanded its Russian language collection. The Marketing team launched a Spanish-language Awareness Campaign, after learning many immigrants are unaware library services are free; it featured key services targeted to Spanish-speaking neighborhoods using billboards, bus shelters, radio, and TV.
- **At-risk youth (14% of LEAPs):** Systemwide programs like the *Turns the Tables DJ Lab* and *Microsoft DigiCamps* have helped tweens and teens in select communities learn about STEAM and career opportunities. The Library’s *My Brother’s Keeper Peer Advocate* program hires young people of color with lived experience to serve as Library advisors and liaisons between staff and youth in select communities, while providing opportunities to gain valuable life and work skills, helping the Peer Advocates to reach their career goals.
- **People experiencing homelessness (8% of LEAPs):** Libraries created resource lists for showers, meals, and local shelters, and hosted wellness events.

Making a dent in an issue as sweeping as inequity can seem like a daunting task, but by empowering staff as change agents knowledgeable of local community needs, the Library can take over 100 steps toward addressing inequities each year. *iCount* was developed from the ground up by Library staff, who recognize that perception cannot be changed overnight; it must be achieved through continual education. In introducing *iCount* trainings, the Library initiated an essential conversation—one that encourages both frontline and support staff to think of programs and services as adaptable and inclusive, in order to be truly impactful. By filling service gaps and improving resource offerings based on identified needs, *iCount* helps all County residents feel welcome in the library.

Within the library industry, *iCount* has been recognized as a replicable and sustainable model, bringing greater visibility to the County’s public services. The Library was invited to present on *iCount* during a *Library Journal* equity webinar, the New England Library Association Diversity Summit, the Urban Library Council Equity Convening, the California Library Association Conference, the American Library Association Conference, and the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color, to name a few.

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

GOAL I. MAKE INVESTMENTS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

Strategy I.1 – Increase Our Focus on Prevention Initiatives and Strategy I.2 – Enhance Our Delivery of Comprehensive Interventions

In intentionally designing programs and services to meet the needs of under-resourced County communities that experience inequities, *iCount* addresses many Strategic Plan Strategy I goals, including: Promote Supportive Parenting (I.1.1), Support Educational Outcomes for Systems Involved Youth (I.1.4), Support Library Efforts to Engage Children and Families (I.1.7), Support Job Readiness and Increase Employment Opportunities for Youth Served by the County (I.2.4), Implement My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) (I.2.5), Women and Girls’ Initiative (I.2.6), Plan for Age-Friendly Communities for Older Adults (I.2.7), Support the Long Term Success of Transitional Aged Youth (I.2.9). Hundreds of localized programs at libraries and in Library support divisions focus their design on these audiences, based on community needs.

GOAL II. FOSTER VIBRANT AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Strategy II.2 – Support the Wellness of our Communities

Systemwide Library programs developed as part of *iCount* focus on serving at-risk and systems involved youth, parents and caregivers lacking access, unemployed and job-seeking adults, potentially isolated older adults, and more. For example, these programs have helped address Strategy II.1.3 (Coordinate Workforce Development) by helping connect priority populations to workforce development opportunities as well as careers in the creative economy. The Spanish-language marketing campaign that resulted from a LEAP helped address Strategy II.2.2 (Expand Access to Recreational and Cultural Opportunities) by informing high-needs communities of free library programs and services available to them, thereby expanding access to populations that underutilized these services simply out of a lack of awareness.

GOAL III. REALIZE TOMORROW’S GOVERNMENT TODAY

Strategy III.1 - Continually Pursue Development of Our Workforce

As an initiative developed by staff and highly reliant on a train-the-trainer model for regular staff discussions, *iCount* supports Strategy III’s goal III.1.1 (Develop Staff Through High Quality Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Training.) *iCount* training has included Staff Development Days, guest speakers from a variety of institutions, video content, and internal presentations. The rotating *iCount Leadership Committee* and regular *iCount* trainings give management staff the opportunity to hone leadership skills while facilitating sometimes difficult conversations, and give all staff the opportunity to explore topics they may have been unaware of, which will inevitably have an expanding impact on workplaces and public service.

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COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY): 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 must 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. Use Arial 12-point font

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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\$	\$	\$	\$	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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