

Quality and Productivity Commission
33rd Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program
"Empowering Innovative Solutions"

2019 APPLICATION

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

NAME OF PROJECT: CAREER ONLINE HIGH SCHOOL: DIPLOMAS FOR ADULTS

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: JUNE 2015

(Must have been fully implemented for a minimum of at least one year - on or before July 1, 2018)

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 Career Online High School is an online diploma program offered for free by LA County
 2 Library to its adult customers. The program aims to help combat low countywide
 3 graduation rates by taking advantage of the Library being a trusted learning resource in
 4 the community. Adults 19 and over can earn their accredited diploma, plus a career
 5 certificate in one of 10 high-growth fields, from childcare & education to office
 6 management, encouraging new career pathways for adults who never completed their
 7 education. All web-based coursework can be accessed 24/7, enabling students to earn
 8 their diploma at their own pace, and the program can be completed in 18 months or
 9 less. Library Adult Literacy staff support students at every step, including offering laptop
 10 checkouts to those who do not own the technology to complete the program. Students
 11 are assigned a personal career coach that follows their progress and helps prepare
 12 them to enter the workforce, with training in resume and cover letter writing. The Library
 13 began offering the program in 2015 and has since helped 142 graduates complete the
 14 program. The Library has held 3 graduation events to celebrate graduates'
 15 accomplishments in-person with their friends and families, with the next on June 29.

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 562.940.8462
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME Kelly Hulbert		TELEPHONE NUMBER 562.940.8521 EMAIL KHulbert@library.lacounty.gov
PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME) Samangi Skinner	DATE <i>Samangi Skinner</i> 6/26/19	TELEPHONE NUMBER 562.940.4106 EMAIL SSkinner@library.lacounty.gov
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE Skye Patrick	DATE <i>[Signature]</i> 6/26/19	TELEPHONE NUMBER 562.940.8400

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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 trails behind the nation in educational attainment, scoring 4.96 on the Educational Index, compared to 5.17 nationally. More than 1 in 5 adult Angelenos (22%) lack a high school diploma, compared to 13% nationwide. *A Portrait of Los Angeles County* identifies 5 different LA Counties; the lowest ranking of which—*Struggling LA* and *Precarious LA*—have staggering numbers. In *Struggling LA*, 3 in 10 adults lack a diploma, and over 20% of households live in poverty. Comparatively, in *Precarious LA*, more than half the adults never graduated high school, leading to a poverty rate of 35.4%, more than double the countywide rate. Those with more education are, not surprisingly, more likely to earn higher salaries with better working conditions and benefits, and less likely to be unemployed. Research by Measure of America and United Way Worldwide found that if all adults in LA County without diplomas magically received them, median personal earnings would increase by \$1,800, and about 150,000 fewer people would live in poverty. But the benefits of high school education extend far beyond the economic. Forecasts show that if all adults received diplomas, life expectancy would increase by 1.5 years, the murder rate would fall nearly 9%, and the voting rate would increase almost 10%. Of the bottom-20 scoring LA County communities identified in the report, nearly all are the home of an LA County Library location. This led Library leadership to wonder – how could the Library, a trusted source and space, move the needle on this issue?

SOLUTION

Inspired by its goals to support lifelong learning and eliminate barriers, the Library began offering Career Online High School (COHS) in 2015. The program was designed by Gale/Cengage, a third-party company. It gives adults ages 19 and over the opportunity to earn their accredited high school diploma online, for free. Learners also earn a career certificate in 1 of 10 high-demand fields, which currently include: Certified Protection Officer, Childcare & Education, Commercial Driving, Food & Hospitality, General Career Preparation, Home Care Professional, Homeland Security, Hospitality & Leisure, Office Management, and Retail Customer Service. Classes are available 24/7, allowing students to customize their studies to fit their busy schedules. The curriculum consists of courses in Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, and career elective credits in the student’s field of choice. 18 total credits are intended to be completed in 18 months or less, but with high school and/or GED transfer credits, the program can be completed in as little as 5 months. The Library purchased 50 seats to start, and received a grant from the Clinton Global

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Initiative for 25 additional seats, initiating a pilot program in unincorporated areas (Lancaster and East Los Angeles). It has since rapidly expanded (see *Benefits*). These days, online diploma mills frequently charge for their services, many of which are not accredited, leaving adult learners unsure of where to begin. COHS is fully accredited as an online school district by AdvancED, which provides nationally-recognized accreditation for 32,000 public and private schools and districts across the US and in 70 countries worldwide. Offering the program through the Library adds a level of trust for those who already turn to librarians for education and career advice. Library Adult Literacy staff work one-on-one with students, despite the program being off-the-shelf. After an online self-assessment, students take an initial interview, in which staff do their best to set expectations and prepare students for success. Staff follow up with regular check-ins, especially with those whose progress may be stalled. Based on student needs and life circumstances, staff may allow for a leave of absence, which allows a student to return to the program after 6 months, or help them checkout a laptop at an LA County Library location, if they do not have technology available at home. Each student is also assigned an academic coach who welcomes them to the program and checks in at least once every 2 weeks. Coaches prepare students for the workforce by helping them draft their cover letter and resume, and teaching them to research, locate, and contact potential employers.

BENEFITS

Since the program was implemented in 2015, 142 students have graduated, with annual averages continually growing: 1 graduate each in 2015 and 2016, 25 graduates in 2017, 65 in 2018, and 50 so far in 2019 (on track to exceed 85 graduates by year-end). The California State Library has offered a matching grant 3 times, matching 50 seats in 2016, 95 seats in 2017, 200 seats in 2018, and 195 seats in 2019, with grants totaling \$591,300. The Library’s ultimate goal is successful graduates—it is one of 52 libraries in the state of California offering the program, second in enrollment to Los Angeles Public Library, who has only 50% completion, compared to LA County Library’s 71%. While the Library has always promoted COHS at community outreach events and on its social media channels, after the library’s rebranding in May 2018, its marketing team developed a new campaign focused on the benefits of the program—*Diplomas Open Doors*. New bus shelter posters were geographically targeted to the 20 libraries with the lowest high school graduation rates, representing communities like Florence-Graham, East LA, Bell, and Willowbrook. Efforts are paying off, with graduation totals in the first 6 months of 2019 more than double the same time period in 2018. The team is currently working on expanding efforts to a major digital advertising campaign to capture the attention of digitally-savvy customers already searching for free diploma opportunities online. The Library has held 3 graduation events, with a fourth scheduled for June 29, 2019, to celebrate the graduates’ accomplishments in the presence of family and friends.

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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.

The project supports all three Strategic Plan goals in different ways.

It supports Goal I, *Make Investments that Transform Lives*, specifically 1.2.9, *Support the long-term success of transitional aged youth*, as the Library has a Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) Coordinator who works with TAY housing sites and promotes COHS to appropriate individuals. As many TAY are age 19 or over, and may not have completed high school, a free online diploma program is a good fit for many and helps “ensure self-sufficiency upon emancipation,” as described in the goal.

COHS also supports Goal II, *Foster vibrant and resilient communities*, specifically II.1.3, *Coordinate Workforce Development* - Identify and align workforce development programs to provide career pathways for high-needs, priority populations and to support the labor needs of the County’s high-growth industry sectors. Because many LA County Library locations are in the County’s lowest-educated communities, and the program is more heavily promoted in these communities, it gives residents a way to earn their diploma along with a career certificate for free, preparing them for a high-demand career in a growth industry of their choosing.

Finally, the program supports Goal III, *Realize tomorrow’s government today*, specifically III.2.2, *Leverage Technology to Increase Visibility of and Access to Services*. Because the program is fully web-based, it can be promoted and accessed online, 24/7, regardless of a constituent’s schedule or transportation issues. This helps the Library “maximize the use of technology to raise awareness of available programs and services,” as the goal states, and also enables adult students to learn in a more convenient way.

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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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