

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: READING MACHINE: LITERACY & STEAM AT PRESCHOOLS

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: MAY 2018

(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 There are more than 6,000 daycare providers in LA County. However, these providers
 2 often lack the resources or expertise to develop children’s literacy skills. To address the
 3 missed opportunity, LA County Library developed the Reading Machine—a mobile
 4 program that visits licensed home daycares and preschools to engage children with
 5 literacy and STEAM activities through Storytime, while providing caregivers with tools
 6 and resources to enhance their interactions with the children in their care. Visits are
 7 often regular and recurring. The fleet of 5 Reading Machine vehicles also participates in
 8 community outreach events to deliver Storytime programming and a pop-up play area
 9 for parents and children to play and interact with Library staff. With low national literacy
 10 rates—66% of children are not reading at grade level according to a report by the
 11 Annie E. Casey Foundation—the Reading Machine focuses on 9 communities with
 12 urgent needs that were identified as high-risk for illiteracy, poverty, and mental illness. A
 13 total of 945 site visits were conducted by the Reading Machine vehicles from May 2018
 14 through April 2019, with a total of over 20,000 learning engagements by young children
 15 and adults.

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
\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	X

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 Heather Firchow		TELEPHONE NUMBER 562.940.8522 EMAIL hfirchow@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  6/26/19	TELEPHONE NUMBER 562.940.4106 EMAIL sskinner@library.lacounty.gov
DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE Skye Patrick	DATE  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

Los Angeles County is a vast and diverse county, and home to over 747,000 children between the ages of 0–5. Year by year, LA County Library reaches over 150,000 children through high-quality literacy programs hosted at its 87 library locations. Although this is a large number of children served, there are nearly 600,000 children in the County that do not benefit from the engaging programming developed to build critical early reading skills, which are inherently necessary for future academic and life success. According to a report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, nearly 66% of children in the U.S. are not reading at grade level by the 3rd grade. It has been found that children that do not read at grade level by the 3rd grade are more likely to drop out of high school. In order for children to succeed in school, and in life, it is imperative that they are exposed to reading and language beginning at birth. The greatest window of opportunity to develop the neurological wiring necessary to succeed in reading and writing is reached between birth and age 3. In that critical period of life, parents, caregivers, and the community should provide opportunities for children to thrive.

SOLUTION

The Reading Machine is an innovative service model—vans that travel beyond library walls, throughout Los Angeles County, to provide children and caregivers at preschools and daycares an opportunity to develop a lifelong love of learning and reading. The Reading Machine currently focuses on 9 communities which are identified as high-risk for illiteracy, poverty, and mental health needs: Bell, Compton, El Monte, Florence, Hawaiian Gardens, Lake Los Angeles, Lancaster, San Fernando, and South Whittier. These locations cover the 5 Supervisorial Districts within the County and score low on the Human Development Index according to the report, *A Portrait of Los Angeles County*. The Reading Machine vehicles make regular visits to preschools and daycares and provide high-impact and high-energy Storytime and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) programming for children. Storytime and STEAM kits are made available to teachers and providers at the sites. Kits include books, flannel stories, puppets, music CD or lyrics to music, and STEAM related, age-appropriate developmentally appropriate Early Literacy and STEAM activities to extend children’s exploration, augmenting the Reading Machine visits. Additionally, the Reading Machine participates in community outreach opportunities to deliver Storytime programming similar to ones offered at site visits. It also offers pop-up play areas to give children and caregivers an opportunity to spend quality time playing together and interacting with Reading Machine staff.

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BENEFITS

Libraries across the nation are viewed as safe spaces that provide invaluable services to all members of the community, but these services have often been restricted to brick-and-mortar buildings that may be out of reach to some. As part of the Library’s effort to remove barriers and increase access to library resources, the Library took the initiative to take its programming into the communities. As such, the Library’s mobile fleet has drastically expanded since 2016, from 3 vehicles to an 18-vehicle fleet; which includes 3 Bookmobiles, 10 MākMō maker mobiles, and 5 early literacy Reading Machine vehicles. Each type of vehicle addresses a specific need in the communities, and the goal of the Reading Machine is to help improve literacy skills in young children.

During visits to preschools and daycare centers, the Reading Machine staff offer new Library card sign-ups, allowing children and families more access to Library resources, including digital resources which can be accessed from the comfort of their home. Children who may not have visited libraries previously were able to experience a Library program and left with a positive experience. In addition to reading to children, basic STEAM concepts are presented to expose children to the creative process and encourages collaboration at an early age. Caregivers are provided with information about the Library and receive resources and tools to further develop children’s literacy skills.

Reading Machine programming includes time for play—something that not all caregivers may know is an important element of early literacy. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, free and unstructured play is healthy and essential for helping children reach important social, emotional, and cognitive development milestones, as well as essential in helping them manage stress and develop resiliency.

Children that participate in Reading Machine programs also receive a free book to help build their own home library. According to a 20-year study conducted by sociologists from the University of Nevada, Reno, and UCLA, owning as few as 20 books can have a positive outcome on the level of education a child can reach. A home library is even more important than a parent’s education level.

From the launch of the program in May 2018 through April 2019, Reading Machine staff have visited 945 preschools and daycares, leading to over 20,000 learning engagements by young children and adults during the program timeframe. These children are developing early literacy skills, and caregivers are provided with resources, support, and education that will help them to continue to strengthen bonds and work towards helping the children reach their full potential.

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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.

This project addresses all three of the County’s Strategic Plan goals in different ways.

It supports Goal I, *Make Investments that Transform Lives*, specifically Strategy I.1.7, *Support Library efforts to engage children and families*. LA County Library developed the Reading Machine to extend the reach of early learning and literacy programs, beyond library walls, to communities with limited access or knowledge of library services, enabling the Library to help families and children reach developmental milestones.

The Reading Machine also supports Goal II, *Foster Vibrant and Resilient Communities*, with a specific focus on Strategy II.2, *Support the Wellness of our Communities* through II.2.2 – identify, support, and promote practices for higher quality of life through enhanced social cohesion, increased awareness of supports and services, and better mental health and well-being. The Library has taken our services beyond library walls to expand access for underserved communities in high-needs areas and help children, parents, and caregivers obtain the tools and resources they need to provide early literacy education for the children. Additionally, as part of grant funding received for preventive programming through the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Reading Machine librarians were specially-trained to identify behavioral issues and perform symptoms-checks, assisting in addressing mental health and well-being pre-emptively.

Additionally, the project supports Goal III, *Realize Tomorrow’s Government Today*, specifically Strategy III.3.2., *Manage and Maximize County Assets*. LA County Library sought out existing County grant opportunities and funding to subsidize this program. With funding through the Quality and Productivity Commission’s Productivity Investment Fund (PIF) grant, as well as preventive program funding through DMH, the Library was able to purchase the vehicles needed to make this mobile service program a reality for underserved youth and families in County communities.

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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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\$	\$	\$	\$	X

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