

Expanding Community Services at Saint Paul Public Library

Year 1 Evaluation Report

Anna Granias, M.P.H. and Bunchung Ly

JANUARY 2021



Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive summary..... | 1 |
| Key findings..... | 2 |
| Recommendations..... | 2 |
| Next steps for the community services model | 4 |
| An introduction to SPPL’s innovative efforts to expand community services..... | 5 |
| About the service model | 6 |
| Adjustments and lessons from COVID-19 | 6 |
| Logic model and evaluation planning..... | 7 |
| Year 1 data collection methods..... | 10 |
| Patron interviews | 10 |
| Patron survey | 11 |
| Staff survey | 12 |
| Key findings for library patrons and the broader community..... | 13 |
| Goal A. Reduce barriers to access | 13 |
| Goal D: Increase participation and use | 23 |
| Goal E. Increase trust and satisfaction in library among community | 25 |
| Recommendations for community programming and services | 26 |
| Key findings for library staff | 27 |
| Goal A. Increase staff capacity to provide culturally responsive services | 27 |
| Goal B: Increase staff skills to work with community members..... | 32 |
| Recommendations for staff activities..... | 34 |
| Next steps for the community services model | 36 |



Executive summary

Embedded in a city with a population that is 20% foreign-born¹, the Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL) is developing an innovative community service model that goes beyond language-specific services and programming. Over the last two years, SPPL has prioritized and invested in the expansion of its Community Services program, focusing on co-creating culturally responsive and informed programs, resources, and services to support some of the most marginalized community members in the Twin Cities—immigrants and refugees—and to address inequities in library services. SPPL’s model explores what it can look like to transform library services from the inside out to create an environment and connections between staff and community that provide patrons with a true sense of belonging and ownership at the library.

In 2020, SPPL contracted with Wilder Research, a nonprofit, mission-driven research and evaluation organization, to conduct an evaluation of their service model. With the help of community representatives, Wilder conducted surveys and interviews with Karen, Latinx, and Somali library patrons and a survey of library staff. The evaluation provides baseline information and in-depth qualitative data about how the role of cultural liaisons has had an impact on the experience of patrons from these communities and the perceived capacity and skills development of library staff.

¹ Minnesota Compass. City of St. Paul geographic data profile. <http://www.mncompass.org/profiles/city/st-paul>

Key findings

The experiences of library patrons – Patrons who have interacted with the cultural liaisons reported overwhelmingly positive experiences with library services. The majority of survey and interview respondents feel that their preferences and the preferences of their community are heard and understood at the library. While many patrons reported feeling knowledgeable about resources at the library and said the resources available are useful to them, knowledge of services varied across respondents depending on the approach and programming/services provided by the liaison for a particular community. The most frequently utilized resources across the three cultural groups were resources for English language learning as well as interpreting and translating assistance, computer classes, and homework help for children.

Particularly among Somali patrons, the cultural liaison is viewed as a trusted, culturally responsive navigator, translator, resource connector, relationship builder, and a role model and mentor for youth. Patrons feel that the cultural liaisons have helped build their confidence and independence to navigate the library and experience the full benefit of what it has to offer. The library is viewed as a welcoming space, largely due to the helpfulness and kind interactions from staff members, namely the cultural liaisons.

Areas of growth among library staff – Cultural liaisons have contributed to capacity and skill building among library staff to better serve immigrant and refugee communities. Staff expressed an increased understanding of how community members prefer to receive information and resources, and increased knowledge of the existence and location of relevant resources. Staff are experiencing an improvement in their interactions with patrons due to social and communications skills they have developed through observing the cultural liaisons. Library staff view cultural liaisons as an essential bridge between library services and communities underrepresented at the library.

Areas for continued capacity building among library staff – The majority of staff are not satisfied with their ability to serve Karen, Latinx, and Somali patrons. Library staff desire professional development that will enhance their ability to work with non-English speaking patrons and feel that they would benefit from improved internal communication about the role of the cultural liaisons and their activities. Staff perceive the library's approach to serving these communities as innovative; however, staff suggest there is still a need for increased diversity among staff members and for integrating cultural liaisons into the regular operations of the library as full-time positions. Some staff members believe there should be more opportunities for career advancement for cultural liaisons and other positions centered on community engagement.

Recommendations

Strengths of SPPL's community services model are evident based on feedback from both library patrons and staff. SPPL will continue to define, evaluate, and strengthen this model to inform other public libraries working to serve immigrant and refugee populations in their communities. In addition, community services received a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for a COVID-19 response. Fewer than 5% of proposals received funding, and SPPL was one of them. Recommendations and next steps based on the findings from this evaluation were developed with this new funding stream in mind.

Recommendations and next steps also proceed within SPPL's strategic framework. Specific goals are to embed, grow, and sustain Community Services work across our system; and increase collaboration with and improved service for racial and ethnic groups currently underrepresented among library users.

Recommendations for activities with community members

When asked about the one thing the library could do to meet their needs, respondents most commonly mentioned more library staff who speak their language, more resources in their language (e.g., books), opportunities for English language learning, homework help for children, and computer and internet resources.

Based on these responses from library patrons, SPPL might consider the following recommendations:

- Continue to provide supports such as internet access and technology solutions so community members can attend virtual programs and continue building skills.
- Scale up current programming in these areas and develop similar programming for additional priority communities (e.g., Hmong, Native American/Indigenous) with the assumption that these are helpful and important entry points for engaging individuals and families.
- Partner more intentionally with other city departments, Saint Paul Public Schools, and community members to provide high quality virtual or hybrid programs in areas identified by community members as helpful: homework help, distance learning support, English language learning, and citizenship and immigration support.
- Strategically promote existing programming and resources in these areas through individual relationships, displays, and special events, thereby increasing the reach and impact of these services.
- Explore referrals to provide patrons with additional services and supports related to topics of most interest for these communities or additional avenues (e.g., outside of the library walls) for delivering these services.

Recommendations for activities with library staff

The following recommendations for program improvement are based on key findings and suggestions provided by library staff.

- Provide professional development opportunities aimed at building confidence and skills among library staff to serve members of cultural communities, with a special focus on serving Karen community members and residents with limited English proficiency.
- Sustainably develop more creative and nontraditional programming informed by and co-created with community members and partners by intentionally connecting the work of the cultural liaisons with other teams and groups charged with system-wide programming within the library, or by building/strengthening partnerships for this purpose.
- Provide more language-specific programming and translated materials. For example, prioritize co-creating programs and services with communities specifically for those communities and in their language of choice.
- SPPL might consider working with staff to understand cultural responsiveness beyond the availability of language-specific programming and resources. Communities need different approaches to feeling seen, safe, and welcome—what is a welcoming program for a family with a child in language immersion schooling is not the same as what is welcoming for a family that speaks that language at home and experiences barriers as immigrants.

- Improve internal communication via frequent updates from cultural liaisons, or establish a centralized location of cultural liaisons' work and resources for easier access.
- Fund and integrate the cultural liaison position at full time and as a permanent position across all library branches. Additionally, consider developing career pathways for individuals in positions focused on community engagement. Providing the liaisons with their own desk space may be a symbolic and practical way to demonstrate the permanency of their role at the library.
- Review and adjust hiring practices to decrease barriers for individuals who may not meet the current educational requirements to include a wider range and diversity of experiences and expertise among staff.

Next steps for the community services model

Overall, evaluation findings support further investment and expansion of the cultural liaison position within the library. Identified as critical connectors to the library for members of Saint Paul's immigrant and refugee communities, SPPL plans to improve upon this model and share the successes with other public libraries as detailed below.

- Refine the Expanding Community Services logic model based on Year 1 evaluation findings and developments during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Add a full-time Karen-speaking liaison to better serve this community in the library system. Evaluation data suggest that SPPL staff would benefit from a better understanding of Karen community needs, and Karen community members would benefit from a better understanding of the full range of library offerings.
- Expand the service model to target additional cultural communities (e.g., Hmong, Black, Native American/Indigenous), focusing on developing existing SPPL staff whenever possible.
- Create a cohort of SPPL staff working as cultural liaisons to support each other, refine and evaluate the service model, the liaison title and job descriptions, and communicate with SPPL staff more frequently.
- Finish the work of embedding cultural liaisons in the library by updating and adding better ways for staff and community members to contact liaisons, providing the liaisons with needed equipment, securing office space, and standardizing data collection methods.
- Align programming with other city departments, most notably the city attorney's office, to develop programming related to citizenship and immigration processes.
- Several cultural liaison positions will now be funded through the city's general fund dollars and are considered "certified" (funded by the city) rather than "provisional" (funded by grant funds).
- Liaisons will continue community conversations, currently held virtually, to surface topics of interest.
- Community Services will support programming that promotes conversation and social cohesion (e.g., celebratory, conversation-focused events) when in-person programming is possible. Examples of past programming like this include community Iftar and Karen Family Engagement Day.
- Share this innovative service model and evaluation findings with the library services field through presentations and publications.

An introduction to SPPL's innovative efforts to expand community services

Public libraries across the country are tasked with evolving their services, programming, and operations to be responsive to the desires and interests of diverse communities made up of an increasing number of new Americans. While a set of best practices does not currently exist, the American Library Association offers nine recommendations for libraries to consider when developing innovative strategies to transform their services to be more impactful for immigrant communities.² Embedded in a city with a population that is 20% foreign-born³, the Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL) is developing an innovative service model that incorporates many of these recommendations and goes beyond language-specific services and programming. SPPL's recent 2019-2022 strategic planning process identified several community insights: 1) people face structural, cultural, and financial barriers to using libraries, 2) people seek an environment that fosters safety and belonging, and 3) people seek programming beyond books and buildings. Additionally, SPPL values include a belief in connection and a belief in the power of belonging. SPPL's model explores what it can look like to transform library services from the inside out to create an environment and connections between staff and community that provide patrons with a true sense of belonging and ownership at the library. Two goals relate directly to this ongoing work: embed, grow, and sustain Community Services work across the library system; and increase collaboration with and improved service for racial and ethnic groups currently underrepresented among library users.

Over the last two years, SPPL has prioritized and invested in the expansion of its Community Services program, focusing on co-creating culturally responsive and informed programs, resources, and services to support some of the most marginalized community members in the Twin Cities—immigrants and refugees—and to address inequities in library services.

Through community engagement as part of its 2018 strategic planning process, SPPL identified three target communities to better serve: Karen, Somali, and Latinx. Qualitative and quantitative data showed that SPPL was underserving its Spanish-speaking community, while, conversely, it could not keep up with demand for services from local Somali and Karen communities. During the first 12 months of program expansion, SPPL recorded 2,950 individual patron reference interactions in Karen, Somali, and Spanish, and facilitated 60 outreach events connecting with over 4,000 people. Critical to the success of this expansion is the role of cultural liaisons, the staff leading this work. In early 2020, in alignment with its commitment to growing and embedding Community Services work, SPPL also identified the Hmong and African American communities as having high need for targeted engagement and dedicated cultural liaison staff time.

² Flinner, K., Norlander, R., Nock, K., Laursen Brucker, J., & Welch, M. (2019). Library programs & new Americans: A white paper. New Americans Library Project. <https://newamericans.ala.org/white-paper/>

³ Minnesota Compass. City of St. Paul geographic data profile. <http://www.mncompass.org/profiles/city/st-paul>

About the service model

Cultural liaisons are staff with community engagement and public services expertise who identify with and speak the native language of a cultural community. SPPL has identified having staff who are of and from cultural communities in Saint Paul as crucial to connecting, building trusting relationships, and more thoroughly understanding the immense scope of need for resources, tools, and support within distinct cultural groups. While 45% of SPPL's staff identify as individuals of color and as members of the diverse array of cultural and ethnic groups in the Twin Cities, cultural liaisons are the only staff empowered through their job responsibilities to present culture first and leverage this identity in direct service to community. In 2019, SPPL employed one full-time Latinx liaison, one part-time Somali liaison (.8 FTE), and two part-time Karen liaisons (.8 FTE split between two people). The liaisons work across several library branches and provide a range of programming and services that vary between cultural communities, depending on interest and need. Examples of these activities include community conversations, virtual programming (e.g., story time), and computer classes.

Adjustments and lessons from COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has strengthened SPPL leadership's priority in growing this programmatic approach because the cultural liaisons have proven to be some of the most valuable, capable, and adaptive staff in the face of unprecedented facilities closures. Other departments with more traditional service approaches rooted in in-person programs and services and in-branch resources have had a longer runway to re-launching their work. The cultural liaisons were able to pivot quickly because their approach is responsive, flexible, and intentionally not rooted in one branch or during specific desk hours. For example, liaisons continued to receive cell phone calls (a primary mode of service) from patrons who did not even know the facilities were closed. After the Governor's stay-at-home order was announced and library facilities closed, liaisons continued to provide resources, referrals, and services and were able to quickly develop remote programming plans.

The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that without SPPL, thousands of Saint Paul residents are disconnected from reliable resources to answer questions about basic needs and unable to navigate the bureaucracy required to unlock critical public resources. This problematic disconnect is two-fold. First, according to data from the 2018 American Community Survey, nearly 30% of city households have no access or uncertain access to broadband, during a time when everything from education to employment has pivoted online. Also, without support, many residents are disconnected from the complex local network of government, social services, and nonprofits, due to systemic barriers to access or lack of awareness about what is available.

The COVID-19 crisis also means that some outcomes, such as those relating to library programs and services in the community, are difficult to measure. During the pandemic, in-person programs and services outside library buildings have taken place through the Bookmobile and outdoors, broadening the concept of what a community program is.

Logic model and evaluation planning

Prior to conducting any data collection to evaluate their service model, SPPL worked with Wilder Research to identify, define, and map their strategies to expand community services and the intended outcomes of those strategies. Wilder Research is a respected, nonprofit research and evaluation group located in Saint Paul with a mission to improve the lives of individuals and families. The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library and SPPL collaborated further with Wilder and several community members to develop an evaluation plan to begin to assess the process and impact of these strategies. The innovative service model identified through a series of workshops, and the associated evaluation plan, were used to guide the year 1 evaluation. Specifically, data collection tools were developed to gather a baseline understanding of the desired outcomes stated in the logic model. Information collected related to activities and outcomes will inform ongoing decision-making about the design, development, and implementation of library programming and the cultural liaison positions.

MISSION:
Saint Paul Public Library welcomes
all people to connect, learn,
discover, and grow.

VISION: We imagine a Saint Paul where
all people feel seen, safe, and welcome.
We imagine a city where libraries bring
people together to experience hope, joy,
and creativity through learning.

VALUES
We believe that learning is a human right.
We believe in curiosity.
We believe in connection.
We believe in the power of belonging.

CONTEXT: Saint Paul Public Library recognizes that there are communities
that have been marginalized due to structures and systems of power that
create barriers to equal access, participation, and utilization of library
services. It is with this understanding that we are intentional about
expanding our community services to support all those who may benefit.

STAFF

COMMUNITY

ACTIVITIES

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

- Internal campaign/updated training for staff
- Diverse staff hired (more than racial/ethnic diversity)
- Job descriptions emphasize community engagement
- Evaluate service model

ADDRESSING ACCESS AND USE/PARTICIPATION

- Welcoming space for people to use as they desire
- Reliable/scheduled activities
- Patrons encouraged to lead other patrons
- Community outreach and engagement outside of SPPL locations
- Programming addressing social, literacy, and technology needs

PROVIDING CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

- Scaling culturally specific, community informed approaches
- New programming co-created with community members

INCREASED CAPACITY TO PROVIDE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SERVICES

- Increased understanding of community preferences related to resource/information sharing
- Improved internal communication
- Expanded understanding of staff and library's role in the community

REDUCED BARRIERS TO ACCESS

- Increased relevance of resources
- Development of innovative responses to address access issues
- Increased awareness of library resources and knowledge of resources outside of library
- Successful connection of people to relevant resources
- Increased usage and engagement among people from Latinx, Somali, and Karen communities
- Increased number of programs and services offered in Somali, Spanish, and Karen language

INCREASED SKILLS TO WORK WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- More career pathways within the library
- Increased job satisfaction

INCREASED PARTICIPATION AND USE

- Improved access to library services, programs, and materials
- Increased access to technology
- Increased use of library spaces
- Increased language acquisition
- Increased representation in library spaces

INCREASED TRUST AND SATISFACTION IN LIBRARY AMONG COMMUNITY

- Increased sense of community ownership and belonging

EVOLVING AND INNOVATIVE PUBLIC SERVICE THAT REFLECTS COMMUNITY

INCREASED SOCIAL CAPITAL AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Increased agency inside and outside the library
- Increased agency and use of information among community members to make informed decisions and access resources available in the community
- Increased opportunity among patrons to create and develop resources for their community

INTEGRATION OF EQUITABLE LIBRARY SERVICES

COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE, INCREASED HAPPINESS, AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

INPUTS

Staff time Flexible funding sources (public, foundation, private donors)
Cultural and community knowledge Technology Reliable Internet access
Library knowledge (early learning, digital inclusion, reliable information sources)
Volunteer time Collection (books & materials)

OUTPUTS

of programs # of visits to programs # hits on online resources lists # of libraries
Circulation of materials in other languages Demographics/languages spoken by patrons
of engagement/outreach visits # of different types of activities # of community partners
of languages represented by staff # of referrals made (especially to social worker)
of questions answered (in languages other than English) during reference survey period
of volunteer hours

BACKGROUND AND EVIDENCE IN THE LITERATURE

In an effort to expand community services to diverse populations – particularly Somali, Latinx, and Karen – in Saint Paul, Minnesota, Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL) takes an innovative approach to partner with and serve such populations within its service area.

Libraries throughout the United States are increasingly including new strategies to engage diverse populations. However, there is limited evidence that they are measuring the associated outcomes. SPPL's efforts to document its service model and evaluate the results of its efforts is critical to the field.

By identifying effective strategies and service models, SPPL can provide more equitable and improved access, participation, and utilization of library services for all communities.

"Have staff that look like the people who come in here. Be more welcoming. Engagement will lead to increase[d] connections to community. Let people know we're here for you, and can connect you to resources. Safe spaces that you can use weekly." – SOMALI LIBRARY STAFF MEMBER

"There's a library culture shift in [SPPL's] approach [to expanding community services]."

– FRIENDS OF SAINT PAUL PUBLIC LIBRARY STAFF

"Thanks to the library, [my] daughter received homework help. When she didn't have a computer, she would come to the library to use one. Use the internet with her iPad from school. I get excited to get books and read to my kids."

– SPANISH-SPEAKING LATINX LIBRARY PATRON

Cultural Liaisons

Cultural liaisons are key to SPPL's approach. They are members of a specific cultural community and speak the language of origin of that community as their first language. They serve as a bridge between the library and their communities, connecting people to library services, programs, and resources.

National Movement

Libraries across the nation seek to engage with and expand services to diverse populations. Examples include:

- Provision of English Language Learning (ELL) opportunities¹
- Cultural Navigator Programs (CNP) that pair newly arrived immigrants with community members to facilitate relationships and build social capital and community connections among immigrant populations²

American Library Association Study

In 2018 the American Library Association's (ALA) Office of Public Programs convened a study to explore public library programs and services that serve new American populations.³ The team reviewed existing literature on the topic and conducted site visits to better understand the experiences of new American library patrons.

ALA then developed a comprehensive list of actionable recommendations for libraries to better support diverse populations. **The key takeaway: The most successful and creative programs meet library patrons where they are and stress that public libraries are safe and welcoming places for all.**

This program is funded in part with a grant from the Minnesota Department of Education using federal funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services Grants to States program.

¹ Flinner, K., Norlander, R., Nock, K., Laursen Brucker, J., & Welch, M. (2019). Library Programs & New Americans: A White Paper. Retrieved from New Americans Library Project: <https://newamericans.ala.org/white-paper/>

² Thomas et al. (2016). Building relationships and facilitating immigrant community integration: An evaluation of a Cultural Navigator Program. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 77-84.

³ (Flinner, Norlander, Nock, Laursen Brucker, & Welch, 2019)

Year 1 data collection methods

Patron interviews

To understand the experience of library patrons from the Karen, Latinx, and Somali communities, we conducted in-depth interviews with community members. SPPL’s cultural liaisons recruited three community representatives to provide translations of data collection protocols and patron survey responses and to conduct interviews with community members in their preferred language. Working with community representatives to conduct data collection served several purposes: 1) it contributed to rapport building and trust among respondents, 2) it built capacity among community members to collect data, and 3) it improved data collection tools based on review and feedback from community representatives. The representatives subcontracted with Wilder Research and were compensated for their work and time. Interview participants included individuals who had experiences interacting with the cultural liaisons. Cultural liaisons provided contact information for potential interview participants, and community representatives contacted participants to schedule and conduct the interviews.

Prior to conducting the interviews, Wilder Research developed a training for the community representatives on how to conduct social science interviews. Community representatives were responsible for participating in the interview training, inviting community members for an interview, conducting interviews, promoting a web survey among their networks, and providing translation of data collection tools (one interview protocol and one survey) and participant responses. In total, community representatives conducted 18 interviews, with seven Karen, seven Latinx, and four Somali participants. Interview participants received a \$20 gift card incentive. The findings from these interviews are limited to the perspectives and experiences of the individuals who participated. While these perspectives may provide helpful information for identifying program outcomes and areas for improvement, they are not representative of all patrons who have interacted with the cultural liaisons from these communities.

Information about interview respondents

The majority of interview respondents reported that they go to the Rondo Library on University Avenue the most. The Rice Street Library was the second most commonly used library by respondents. One respondent said that they have never been to the library because they do not drive, but that they use the Bookmobile (Figure 1).

1. LIBRARY USED THE MOST AMONG INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS (N=18)

| Library branch | Number of respondents |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Rondo | 10 |
| Rice Street | 5 |
| Arlington Hills | 2 |
| Sun Ray | 1 |
| Bookmobile | 1 |

Note. Some respondents mentioned more than one library.

The majority of respondents reported that they had participated in library services prior to the pandemic, while six said that they had participated in library services both before and after the start of the pandemic. Two respondents had only used library services after the pandemic began (Figure 2).

2. USE OF LIBRARY SERVICES PRE- AND POST-PANDEMIC AMONG INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS (N=18)

| Time period of use | Number of respondents |
|--|-----------------------|
| Prior to the start of the pandemic only | 10 |
| Both before and after the pandemic began | 6 |
| After the pandemic began only | 2 |

Patron survey

In addition to interviews with library patrons, Wilder Research worked with SPPL to develop a web survey to be completed by patrons from the key cultural communities, some of whom have interacted with the cultural liaisons and some of whom have not. The survey was distributed to a convenience sample through promotion by cultural liaisons and community representatives. Some surveys were completed on paper at socially distanced community events held by the library. In total, 72 surveys were completed. The majority of survey respondents (96%) speak a language other than English as their primary language at home. More than three-quarters of respondents (85%) identify as female and three-quarters (75%) have children under age 18 living at home. One-half of respondents identify as Karen and over one-quarter identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Respondents range from age 21 to 71 with an average age of 37 (Figure 3).

3. DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

| Demographic characteristics | % of respondents |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Race/ethnicity (N=68) | |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 54% |
| Karen | 50% |
| Hispanic or Latinx | 27% |
| African-born immigrant | 12% |
| Somali | 11% |
| Black or African American | 7% |
| White | 2% |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 0% |
| Other | 0% |
| Gender (N=68) | |
| Female | 85% |
| Male | 15% |
| Age (N=67) | |
| 18-30 | 36% |
| 31-50 | 48% |
| 51+ | 16% |

Note. Respondents could select more than one race/ethnicity. Missing data are not included in this analysis.

3. DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS (CONTINUED)

| Demographic characteristics | % of respondents |
|---|------------------|
| Language primarily spoken at home (N=68) | |
| English | 4% |
| Karen | 54% |
| Somali | 16% |
| Spanish | 24% |
| Another language | 2% |
| Number of children under age 18 at home (N=64) | |
| 0 | 25% |
| 1-2 | 41% |
| 3-5 | 28% |
| 6+ | 6% |

Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they had used library services prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and nearly one-quarter had used library services both before and after the start of the pandemic (Figure 4).

4. USE OF LIBRARY SERVICES PRE- AND POST-PANDEMIC AMONG SURVEY RESPONDENTS (N=66)

| Time period of use | % of respondents |
|--|------------------|
| Prior to pandemic only | 67% |
| Both before and after the pandemic began | 23% |
| After the pandemic began only | 11% |

Note. Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Staff survey

Central to SPPL's approach to serving cultural communities is a focus on building capacity among library staff. Wilder Research conducted a survey of library staff to gather a baseline understanding of staff outcomes related to the expansion of community services. Goals of the innovative service model include increasing staff capacity to provide culturally responsive services, increasing staff skills to work with community members, and evolving innovative public service that reflects the community. The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. All 221 library staff were invited to complete the survey. Seventy library staff completed the survey for a response rate of 32%.

The findings from these data collection activities are described in two sections. This first section summarizes key findings from the staff survey. The second section summarizes findings from the patron interviews and surveys. The report is organized by the outcomes stated in the logic model for both library staff and community members.

Key findings for library patrons and the broader community

Goal A. Reduce barriers to access

SPPL identified six short-term outcomes that reduce barriers to accessing library services for community members. Year 1 findings related to the following outcomes are described in this section.



REDUCED BARRIERS TO ACCESS

- Increased relevance of resources
- Development of innovative responses to address access issues
- Increased awareness of library resources and knowledge of resources outside of library
- Successful connection of people to relevant resources
- Increased usage and engagement among people from Latinx, Somali, and Karen communities
- Increased number of programs and services offered in Somali, Spanish, and Karen language

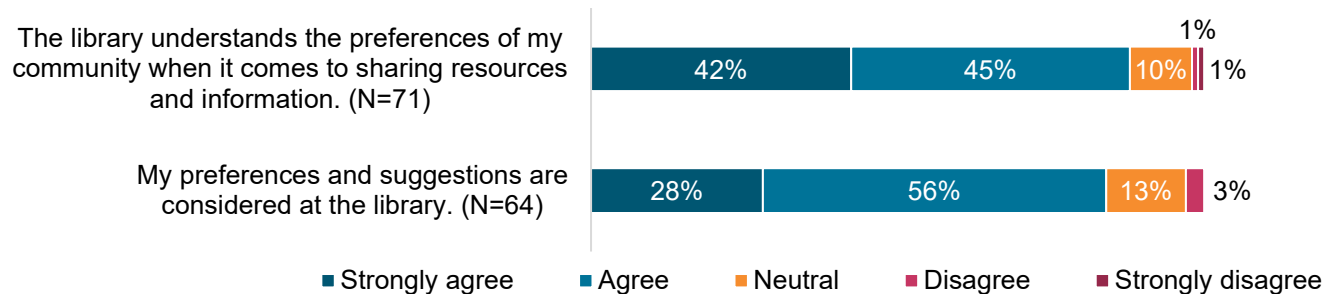
This section weaves together findings from both surveys and interviews with patrons. Interview respondents are individuals who had worked with the cultural liaisons at the library and could speak to their library experiences with those interactions in mind. The aim of the patron survey was to achieve a broader sample in order to compare responses from patrons who had interacted with the cultural liaisons and those who had not. Due to challenges obtaining survey completes during the COVID-19 pandemic, the sampling strategy included outreach from the cultural liaisons and resulted in 75% of respondents indicating that they had interacted with a cultural liaison. Responses from survey respondents are highly favorable and suggest that patrons' interactions with the cultural liaisons has had a positive impact on their experience with library services. However, there are limitations to the interpretation of these findings without a comparison group.

➔ Increased relevance of resources

Perceptions of the library's responsiveness to community preferences

Overall, respondents feel that their preferences and the preferences of their community are heard and understood at the library. The majority of survey respondents indicated that they feel the library understands the preferences of their community related to sharing resources and information and that their preferences and suggestions are considered (Figure 5).

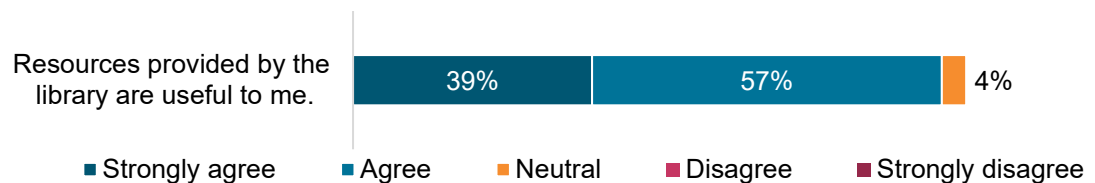
5. PATRON PERCEPTIONS OF LIBRARY'S UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITY PREFERENCES



Note. Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Library resources are useful. When asked about the usefulness of library resources, nearly all survey respondents (96%) indicated that they are useful (Figure 6).

6. USEFULNESS OF LIBRARY RESOURCES (N=67)



Somali interview respondents shared that they have felt a change in the library's responsiveness to their preferences and the preferences of their cultural community since the cultural liaisons began working at the library. The cultural liaison was described as a proactive communicator.

Before, I will say the library wasn't for my community, I felt we were divided by culture and language. But since [the cultural liaison] is here, I learned a lot about the library and their resources. [The cultural liaison] helps us to navigate and always shares any new information. I cannot read English and I was grateful to have someone who speaks my language to translate for me. – Somali interview respondent

Now with [the cultural liaison] on their team, it was a big difference for me and my community. [The cultural liaison] does not wait for us to reach her, but the opposite. She always comes to us, socializes with other communities, communicates, and teaches and mentors our kids. – Somali interview respondent

All Latinx interview respondents reported that they feel the library understands and is responsive to their preferences and the preferences of their community.

I really like all the help they offer and the modesty with which they share it. – Latinx interview respondent

When we arrive [at the library], they focus on what we need to learn. They show us different programs and take their time. I feel very comfortable. – Latinx interview respondent

Similarly, Karen interview respondents feel that the library is responsive to the preferences of their community. One Karen respondent shared that they appreciate that the library helps them with issues that seem to be outside of the library's usual scope of services.

The library is responsive about my needs. I like that the library has [the cultural liaison] shares resources about the library in Karen. It's really helpful. – Karen interview respondent

The library is very helpful to me and my community. They sometimes even help with issues that are not related to the library. Sometimes when we get letters in the mail and we don't understand them we will take it to the library and they will help us fill it out. They also teach us how to use the computer. – Karen interview respondent

Development of innovative response to address access issues

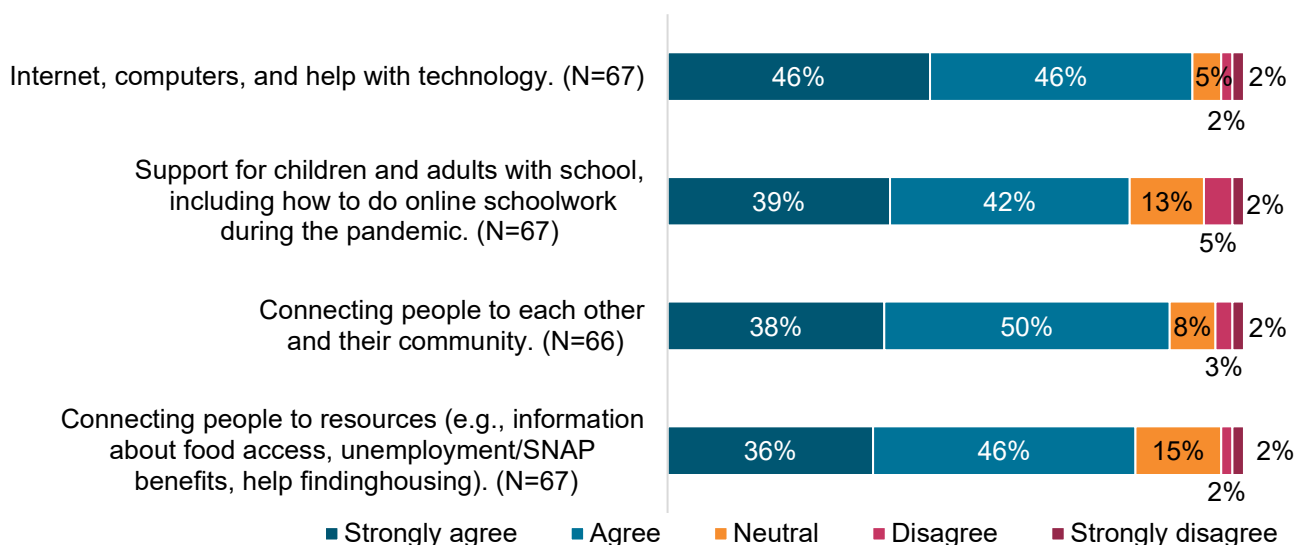
Several of the innovative and responsive strategies the cultural liaisons used to serve their communities were identified through informal conversations with the cultural liaisons. Their flexible scheduling with community members enabled them to meet people at times and in locations that are convenient for them. Prior to the pandemic, liaisons spent a lot of time traveling between library branches, preparing and hosting outreach and engagement events, and developing partnerships with community organizations. Notably, the Spanish-speaking cultural liaison taught computer classes in Spanish in partnership with Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES). Liaisons also assisted in library outreach and engagement events and programming in locations accessible to community members, such as laundromats. Many community members expressed a preference for face-to-face programming and communication and reported unreliable access to internet and technology. While this unreliable access to technology continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, liaisons reported transitioning their communication with community members and programming online. Liaisons reported that a lot of time and effort was invested to set up community members to be able to interact online. They believe this work builds community members' skills, decreases transportation barriers, and increases empowerment among those they work with. In response to preliminary evaluation findings, one liaison commented, "The future is more hybrid, and we are building skills in people to be able to operate in this new environment."

Liaisons talked about the efficacy of partnering with the Bookmobile to reach community members. The Karen liaisons, in particular, reflected on their experience providing outdoor programming with the Bookmobile in the summer of 2020 at an apartment complex with large numbers of Karen residents as a way to break down transportation barriers and simultaneously provide library services.

Increased awareness of library resources and knowledge of resources outside of the library walls

Survey respondents feel knowledgeable about several of the resources the library has to offer. When asked about four different types of library resources, 92% of respondents indicated they feel knowledgeable about technology services offered through the library. Respondents were least knowledgeable about support for children and adults with online school during the pandemic and about support from the library to connect with social services (Figure 7).

7. PATRON KNOWLEDGE OF LIBRARY SERVICES



Note. Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Interview participants were asked about their awareness and knowledge of different services provided by the library. Specifically, they were asked about their awareness of in-library materials, programs, and services; online library services, such as databases, books online, and virtual homework help; and library services provided in community, such as the Bookmobile, services brought to the laundromat, and computer classes. Knowledge of these resources varied across resource type and across each cultural group. Overall, respondents indicated that their knowledge of library services came almost entirely from communication with the cultural liaisons.

In-library materials, programs, and services

All Somali interview respondents reported that they are more aware of in-library services through communication from the cultural liaison. Specifically, respondents noted their awareness and use of homework help, field trips and programs for families, computer classes, the teen room, and meeting rooms. Respondents expressed that, unlike in the past, they now receive up-to-date information communicated in a timely way. Two respondents noted that they have appreciated assistance they have received with the translation of important documents, enabling them to apply for government benefits or other important social services.

Additionally, the cultural liaison has taught patrons the rules related to room use and use of computers, which respondents said they did not understand before.

Before, the only program I was familiar was the computers, the homework room. I didn't understand why the meeting room was full of people, and the information always came late. But with [the cultural liaison], I'm very well informed before the events or program and I always have a phone call from [the cultural liaison] to remind me if I didn't show up before. – Somali interview respondent

I'm very familiar with homework room, computers classes and the teen rooms. But [the cultural liaison] teach[es] me more than those three things from the library. She helps me to update my welfare information and I was amazed. Before I had to go to Hennepin County for translation. – Somali interview respondent

Now I'm an expert, before I needed a lot of explanations and practice. [The cultural liaison] took the time to teach me with patience and respect. I'm familiar with the homework room, the volunteers for tutoring the reading, and the events they organized at different rooms. If [the cultural liaison] didn't take the initiative or share new info daily to help me, I will be back to my old library because of lack of communication. – Somali interview respondent

[The cultural liaison] helped us with all the applications for low-income families. She is the one who explained the stimulus check to us, the EBT COVID-19, and the food delivery. – Somali interview respondent

I learned about the citizen and computer classes, the teen room and the meeting room. I find with [the cultural liaison] a knowledge and an education. My lack of education was a big disappointment, and I didn't put too much effort to fix it. But [the cultural liaison] advise me and help me to learn English and read with her. I have one-on-one tutoring and every time I was coming back to learn more. – Somali interview respondent

Latinx interview respondents indicated varying levels of knowledge of in-library materials, programs, and services. About half of respondents felt well informed or somewhat informed, and half felt like they knew very little about in-library offerings. Latinx respondents felt most informed about English language learning supports, tutoring resources, homework help and books for children, computer classes, and assistance connecting to social service resources from the cultural liaison.

The majority of Karen interview respondents felt that their knowledge about in-library materials, programs, and services was limited. Several respondents were aware of the Karen class where children can learn the Karen language. One respondent shared that the cultural liaison helped them apply to get computers. When asked about their experience interacting with the cultural liaison, the majority of respondents said their knowledge of library services has increased.

My awareness about library resources has changed since I started working with [the cultural liaison]. I heard about Karen class on Saturday and tutoring. I know about resources, but have never been to the library [building]. – Karen interview respondent

I know about Karen class, tutoring, and reading with kids at the library. I heard about these resources through a friend of mine. She went to the library with her kids before I did and invited my kids and me to join. – Karen interview respondent

Online library services

Rather than commenting on the library's online services, Somali interview respondents talked about support they have received to learn how to use computers and the internet, and to navigate websites to connect to resources. Respondents shared positive experiences working with the cultural liaison in this capacity. Several people have been able to connect to the library's services and other virtual resources during the pandemic because of help they received from the cultural liaison. Two respondents received help accessing online English language learning opportunities. Somali respondents did not mention awareness or use of a library database, however, one respondent mentioned that their children are able to read books online and are part of a young mentor group, facilitated by the library, which now meets virtually.

[The cultural liaison] helped me overcome my resistance to learn anything virtually. She teaches me how to navigate on the website. I listen with my kids [to] the online books and before I knew it, I was understanding English better. [The cultural liaison] help me with the applications to fill up for welfare and how to send [them] back electronically. My kids are part of the young mentor group and they are participating virtually now.

– Somali interview respondent

I like to listen the news in my language, learning English, and [the cultural liaison] teach me how to navigate at the computer. – Somali interview respondent

Latinx interview respondents reported varying levels of knowledge about online library services. The online services mentioned by respondents included books online, virtual homework help, and computer classes. Respondents shared that they became aware of these resources through communication with the cultural liaison.

I know about books online and virtual homework help. I became aware of them through [the cultural liaison].

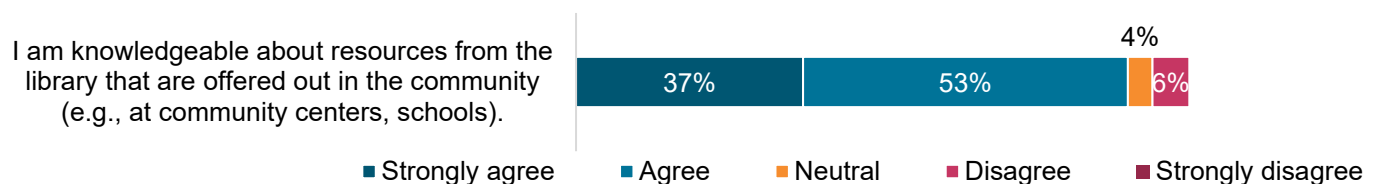
– Latinx interview respondent

Karen interview respondents reported that they did not feel knowledgeable about the library's online services. However, one respondent shared that she knows how to borrow a book online and learned about that resource through her child's school.

Library services provided in community

Ninety percent of survey respondents indicated that they are knowledgeable about the services provided by the library in community settings, such as community centers and schools (Figure 8).

8. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT RESOURCES OFFERED IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS (N=70)



In general, Somali interview respondents were not aware of library services provided outside of the library. However, they expressed interest in learning about them. Alternatively, respondents mentioned successful events that have been held by the library for their community. For example, one respondent talked about an event held at the library where Somali families discussed the importance of Ramadan to their community.

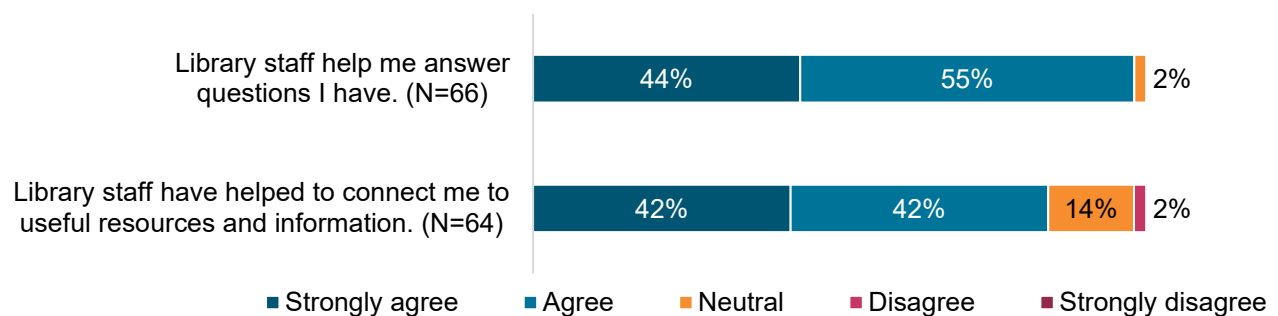
One of seven Latinx interview respondents felt well informed about library services provided in community. There may have been a misunderstanding of how services provided in community are defined, as many of the Latinx respondents have been connected to the library through computer classes provided at a community organization. Some respondents mentioned that they are aware of the computer classes and that the cultural liaison often invites them to events and other opportunities hosted by the library, some of which may be held in community spaces. One respondent shared that the cultural liaison helped her connect to services provided through a community organization to treat depression, and that this referral was helpful to them.

When asked about their awareness of library services in the community, four Karen interview respondents reported that they are aware of the Bookmobile. One respondent mentioned checking out books from the Bookmobile and another said that she no longer uses the Bookmobile because she goes to the library now. Other than the Bookmobile, Karen respondents were not aware of library services provided in community settings.

Successful connection of people to relevant resources

The majority of survey respondents indicated that library staff answer their questions and connect them to helpful resources and information (Figure 9).

9. CONNECTION TO RESOURCES



Note. Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Most used resources

Among interview respondents across the three cultural groups, English language resources, including interpreting and translating assistance, computer classes, and homework help for children were the most commonly mentioned services utilized through the library.

For Somali respondents the primary library resources they use include the computers and computer classes, the homework room, public events, interpreting and translation help, assistance with completing important social services applications, and for socializing.

For my family, we use the computer classes, the homework room, the teen room and when we want to check out books. If they have a public event in the meeting room, I participate now, but before I would never think to do it. – Somali interview respondent

The cultural liaison interprets things and updates me about everything and makes me feel at home in the library. – Somali interview respondent

In our community, our need is huge. She helped us to complete the applications for the welfare, the reduced-lunch meal [at school], the Internet [access] for low-income families, and any letter we receive from Saint Paul Public Schools. Since we are a community with limited English, [the cultural liaison] understands our needs and helps us to navigate in the library. [The cultural liaison] help is humongous for my family and my community. – Somali interview respondent

For Latinx respondents, the resources most frequently used include English language classes, interpreting and translation help, connection to community resources and organizations, computer classes, and homework help for their children. One respondent also mentioned receiving help with groceries.

Karen respondents shared that they use the library for checking out books, printing, quiet corners and children's spaces, computer use, tutoring, homework help, Karen language classes for children, and English language classes.

When asked whether others in their community have been connected to helpful resources at the library, respondents were unsure. However, two Latinx respondents reported that they have shared resources with other people, such as neighbors, friends, family, and coworkers, but they are not aware whether those resources were utilized. One Karen respondent shared that they are aware of others in their community who have begun to use the library to borrow books and for computer use.

➡ Increase usage and engagement among people from Latinx, Somali, and Karen communities

Experience with cultural liaisons

Respondents shared only positive experiences working with cultural liaisons. For many, the cultural liaison is the primary connection they have to the library and serves as a gatekeeper to many library activities.

A girl told me to go to the library and that they could help me there. I went and they didn't speak Spanish, so they asked for my phone number and the next day [the cultural liaison] called me. The truth is that for us it has been a blessing to know [the cultural liaison], because since then she has always been attentive to us. – Latinx interview respondent



Trusted, culturally responsive library navigators, translators, and resource connectors

Across the three respondent groups, the cultural liaisons were described as navigators at the library – connecting people to resources (social services, English language learning, supports for children), educating patrons about how to use the library, and helping fill out forms and translate important documents. A Somali respondent described the cultural liaison as a “good facilitator” and said that they adjust the supports they provide, as appropriate, to be culturally responsive. Similarly, a Latinx respondent referred to the cultural liaison as “there to guide us.” Several Latinx respondents shared that they feel more informed because of their interaction with the cultural liaison. Another respondent stated that they have received significant help from the cultural liaison during the pandemic.

Well, now it is much, much different. [There are] many things that I didn't know, because I hadn't had that kind of experience before. The truth is that the way she treats us, we are very flattered. I have had the opportunity to change many things, to acquire more knowledge of other things. We are always learning from [the cultural liaison]. – Latinx interview respondent

Relationship builders

The Somali cultural liaison was recognized as bridging two cultures. A respondent described her role as “building a relationship between the library and us.” Somali respondents shared that the cultural liaison provides communication via phone as well as visiting the homes of patrons to provide supportive services.

[The cultural liaison] is a young lady who has both cultures; ours and the Western culture. She recognized our lack of interacting with staff or anyone. She appreciated the effort we are making for our kids to be there and [recognized that we] don't feel welcome [at the library]. Just her presence made a big change. Seeing someone who speaks my language gives me the confidence to ask questions. – Somali interview respondent

Developing confidence and independence among patrons

A Somali respondent described the cultural liaison as someone who has helped her build her independence and confidence to be able to navigate the library and other social services despite limited English proficiency.

I'm a shy person, and it was difficult for me to be independent in the library and I have to be dependent on my kids for translation. I was affected by my lack of communication with the English speakers, but [the cultural liaison] empowered me. Under her coaching, I acquired one skill. I wasn't expecting to ask questions to the staff with my gibberish English. [The cultural liaison] taught me to understand English. She obliged us to communicate in English between us so we can feel comfortable to use with others. – Somali interview respondent

Role model and mentor for youth

One Somali respondent referred to the cultural liaison as a role model for youth and instrumental in helping her children with their education. Latinx and Karen respondents also mentioned how supportive the library has been for their children.

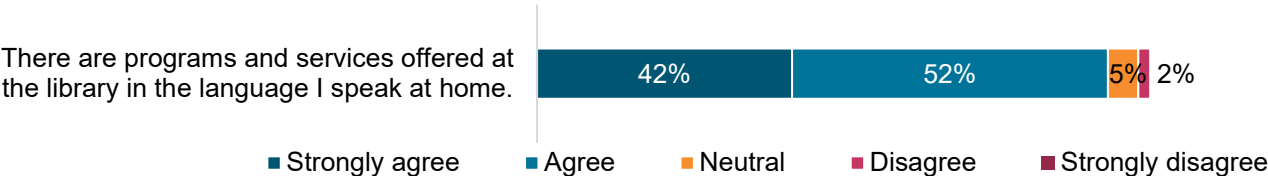
I heard about [the cultural liaison] through our Somali network. My life changed since [the cultural liaison] came to the library. I lived in a different city, but I changed my library for [the cultural liaison]. When I heard the Saint Paul library had a Somali interpreter, I came to see with my own eyes. Before [the cultural liaison], I was only informed about a few resources, the homework room and computers. The tutorial reading, I learned with [the cultural liaison] and now my kids did improve academically.... My life changed. My voice was important and someone was listening to my concerns. I need help for a lot of things, and I got it with [the cultural liaison] beyond my expectations. – Somali interview respondent

[The cultural liaison] helped me and my children connect with the library. Now my children love to enjoy reading more than before and they are learning their native language again. – Karen interview respondent

➡ Increased number of programs and services offered in Somali, Spanish, and Karen language

Nearly all survey respondents indicated that there are programs and services offered at the library in the language that they primarily speak at home (Figure 10).

10. AVAILABILITY OF LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES (N=65)

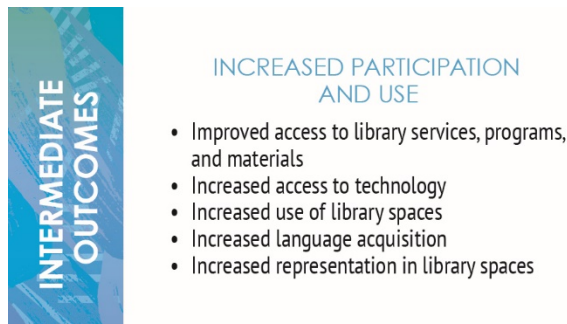


Note. Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

When asked about one thing that the library could do to meet their needs, respondents mentioned the desire for more language-specific resources (e.g., books and other materials).

Goal D: Increase participation and use

SPPL identified five intermediate outcomes that will increase participation and use of library services among community members.



Year 1 findings related to outcomes 1-3 are described in this section. Outcomes 4 and 5 will be assessed in future evaluations.

➡ Improved access to library services, programs, and materials

Somali interview respondents feel more knowledgeable about what is happening at the library and feel confident that the cultural liaison will inform them of anything that is relevant to them. One respondent shared that in the past, she always brought a friend with her to the library to help her navigate services. Now, she feels more confident navigating the library on her own with support from the cultural liaison.

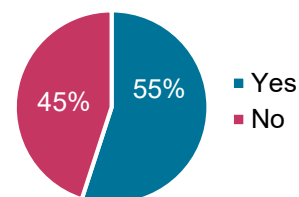
Latinx interview respondents reported that the resources provided by the library have been very helpful to them and their community. Two respondents noted that it is important that the services provided are free. When asked about how their access to services have changed over time, responses varied. One respondent shared that their access has changed a lot, while others reported that it has changed a little or not much at all.

Karen interview respondents felt that their access to services at the library improved simply due to an increase in knowledge and awareness about what the library offers.

➡ Increased access to technology

Ninety percent of survey respondents indicate that they have internet access at home. The greatest proportion of respondents most often access the internet through their laptop computer (49%) or their cell phone (31%). Despite the majority of respondents having access to the internet at home, over one-half of respondents (55%) use internet at the library (Figure 11).

11. INTERNET USE AT THE LIBRARY (N=67)

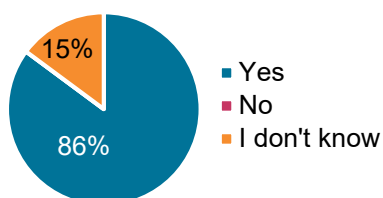


Many interview respondents talked about how helpful it has been to receive assistance from the cultural liaisons related to navigating the internet, and assistance liaisons have provided their children related to schoolwork during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Increased use of library spaces

The majority of survey respondents (85%) indicated that they feel comfortable using library spaces, while 15% were unsure about their comfort level (Figure 12).

12. DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE USING SPACES AT THE LIBRARY? (N=69)



Prayer among Somali interview respondents

When asked about how they use space at the library, all four Somali interview respondents spoke about the use of meeting rooms for prayer. Interviewees shared that in the past they have had several negative experiences trying to pray at the library. Since the cultural liaison began working at the library, they feel more comfortable with using meeting rooms during prayer time and experience fewer interruptions and disrespectful comments.

Before during prayer times, I used a space to pray and I was interrupted by a non-Muslim person to tell me I cannot pray because it was inappropriate. Since [the cultural liaison] is at the library, I can use a room if I want to pray. – Somali interview respondent

When it is prayer time, I use a space or a room to pray, but if the staff see me, they don't interrupt now. Before it was constantly a challenge to pray for a couple minutes quietly. – Somali interview respondent

Six of seven Latinx interview respondents reported that they do not use library spaces. One respondent shared that they use the quiet corners and the computer area. This indicates that most of the Latinx respondents are likely engaging with library services provided in community settings (outside of the library).

Several Karen interview respondents mentioned using the quiet rooms at the library. However, most Karen respondents did not mention the use of library spaces.

Goal E. Increase trust and satisfaction in library among community

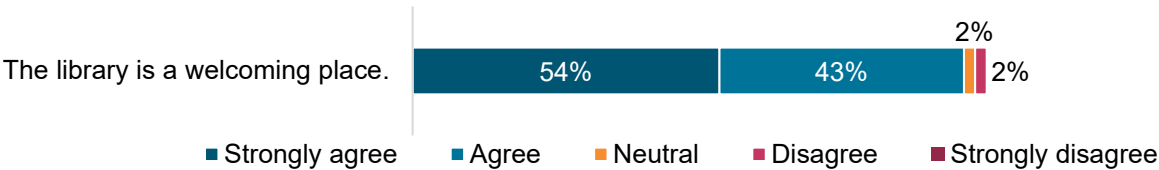
SPPL identified one intermediate outcome that will increase trust and satisfaction in the library among community members. Year 1 findings related to the following outcomes are described in this section.



➡ Increased sense of community ownership and belonging

Nearly all survey respondents (94%) feel that the library is a welcoming place (Figure 13). When asked an open-ended question about what makes it welcoming, respondents shared that the help they receive from library staff to find books or other resources they need is what makes it a welcoming environment. In particular, several respondents talked about the importance of being able to ask questions and have their needs met. Respondents also noted the several inviting characteristics (e.g., “nice, smiling faces,” “always friendly,” “nice words,” “kindness”) among library staff that make the library feel welcoming.

13. PATRON PERCEPTION OF LIBRARY AS A WELCOMING PLACE (N=67)



Note. Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

All interview respondents expressed an increased sense of belonging at the library. One Somali respondent referred to the library as a “second home” for their family and community. Another Somali respondent shared that the cultural liaison has helped build a network of parents who can help support each other and improve the academic performance of their children. Latinx respondents shared that the increased sense of belonging comes from the feeling that the library is a place where you can learn and feel comfortable and welcomed. One Latinx respondent shared that they “can always find help and a person who cares about my needs.”

For so many years, I felt like an outsider who comes [to the library] just for her kids to have homework help. [The cultural liaison] changed everything, and she added a stress-free environment. I like to come to the library for my own entertainment and learning skills. I feel welcome and I see my community interacting with other families with respect and compassion. – Somali interview respondent

[The cultural liaison] made [a lot] possible for my community and my family too. Our group of parents is growing because of [the cultural liaison] and her amazing job. Our network is increasing in our community and we are bringing more parents [together]. Our kids have a better comprehension academically and are learning to do research independently. – Somali interview respondent

I like the way all of the staff welcome us. – Latinx interview respondent

I feel like family even though I have been living here for a short time, since I arrived, everyone has been very nice. When they receive us, they always do it with joy and that makes you feel as if they have known you all your life. – Latinx interview respondent

I feel like I belong to the library because the staff are always so nice. – Karen interview respondent

Recommendations for community programming and services

When asked about the one thing the library could do to meet their needs, the most common responses included the following:

- More library staff who speak their language
- More resources in their language (e.g., books)
- Opportunities for English language learning
- Homework help for their children
- Computer and internet resources

Based on these responses from library patrons, SPPL might consider the following recommendations:

- Continue to provide supports such as internet access and technology solutions so community members can attend virtual programs and continue building skills.
- Scale up current programming in these areas and develop similar programming for additional priority communities (e.g., Hmong, Native American/Indigenous) with the assumption that these are helpful and important entry points for engaging individuals and families.
- Partner more intentionally with other city departments, Saint Paul Public Schools, and community members to provide high quality virtual or hybrid programs in areas identified by community members as helpful: homework help, distance learning support, English language learning, and citizenship and immigration support.
- Strategically promote existing programming and resources in these areas through individual relationships, displays, and special events, thereby increasing the reach and impact of these services.
- Explore referrals to provide patrons with additional services and supports related to topics of most interest for these communities or additional avenues (e.g., outside of the library walls) for delivering these services.

Key findings for library staff

Goal A. Increase staff capacity to provide culturally responsive services

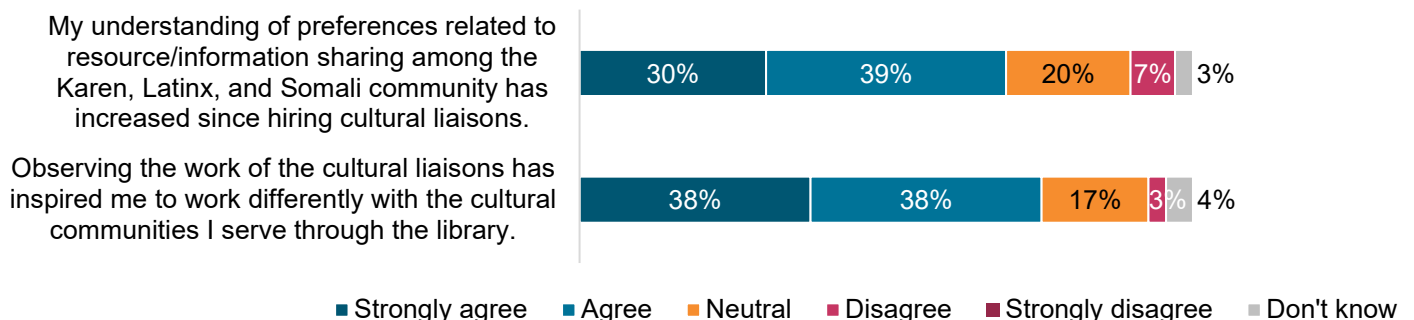
SPPL identified three short-term outcomes for library staff intended to build capacity to provide culturally responsive services. Year 1 outcomes related to the following findings are described in this section.



➔ Understanding of community preferences related to resource and information sharing among library staff

Library staff have an increased understanding of how community members prefer to receive information and resources. When asked about their understanding of preferred resource and information sharing among cultural communities, over two-thirds of respondents (69%) agreed that their understanding has increased since the cultural liaisons joined the library. Three-quarters of staff (76%) agreed that the opportunity to observe the work of the cultural liaisons has inspired them to work differently with the cultural communities (Figure 14).

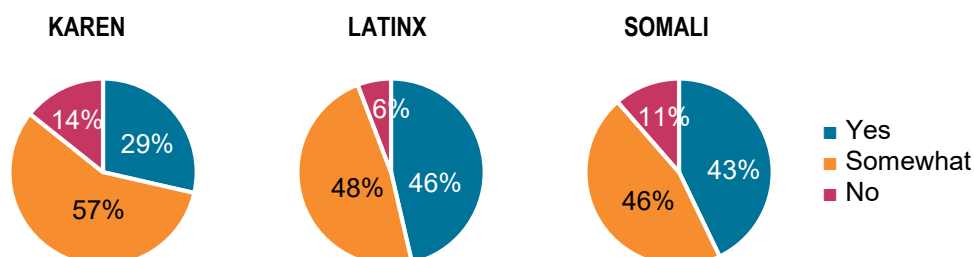
14. STAFF UNDERSTANDING OF RESOURCES AND INSPIRATION FROM OBSERVING CULTURAL LIAISONS (N=69)



Note. Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Library staff do not feel fully equipped to provide relevant resources and referrals to non-English speaking patrons. Although some respondents answered “yes”, more than half answered “somewhat” or “no” when asked if they are able to connect people to relevant resources regardless of whether or not they speak English. A greater proportion of staff reported “yes” when asked if they feel able to connect Somali and Latinx community members to relevant resources compared with Karen community members (Figure 15).

15. I AM ABLE TO CONNECT PEOPLE FROM THE [KAREN, LATINX, SOMALI] COMMUNITY TO RELEVANT RESOURCES, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT THEY SPEAK ENGLISH



Knowledge of the existence and location of relevant resources for specific cultural communities has increased among library staff. When asked about skills they have developed to meet the needs of Karen, Latinx, and Somali patrons, respondents felt that they have greater knowledge of relevant resources and an understanding of where they are located. As a result, staff feel more equipped to provide patrons with meaningful referrals.

I am starting to learn more about the different resources different libraries provide. Although I myself am still learning, I can direct them in the right direction of the cultural liaisons. If not, [I] take their information and let the liaison know about the patron and their situation. – Library staff

[I've] learned a lot more about resources I did not know about, which helped me share the resource for the next time someone had a similar question. – Library staff

Library staff have developed social and communications skills from working with the cultural liaisons that have improved their interactions with patrons from cultural communities. Because of what they have learned, some respondents feel that they are able to communicate more effectively and listen more actively. Respondents also expressed more confidence in their skills to ask questions of patrons in a culturally sensitive way.

My understanding of the Somali culture has improved, and I am able to interact and communicate with Somali families better because of the cultural liaison's help with translation. – Library staff

Being more culturally sensitive to the different ways of asking questions and getting answers. – Library staff

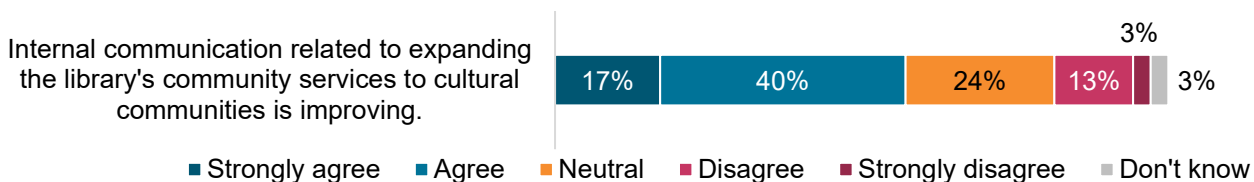
I have developed my active listening skills and choose particular ways to communicate better with patrons from specific cultural communities. [The cultural liaison] inspires me to work better with patrons. – Library staff

I was very ignorant of Karen and Somali cultures before starting to work for the library, but being at Rondo has developed my knowledge and skills a lot. Participating in the English Conversation Circle has given me the chance to connect with and learn from Karen patrons. I have learned a lot about Somali culture from patrons and coworkers, and that knowledge helps me connect better. Even something as seemingly small as being familiar with common names means I start building relationships faster instead of alienating people by mispronouncing or asking them to repeat it a lot. Also, [the cultural liaison] has made me more aware of the needs of Indigenous Latinx patrons that I hadn't considered before, such as not assuming they speak Spanish. – Library staff

➔ Internal communication about culturally responsive services

While library staff feel that internal communication regarding the expansion of community services to cultural communities has gotten better, there is room for improvement. Over half of respondents (57%) agreed that internal communication has improved, while 16% indicated that more or better communication is needed (Figure 16).

16. STAFF PERCEPTION OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION RELATED TO EXPANDING COMMUNITY SERVICES (N=70)



Staff were asked an open-ended question about how the library can improve its expansion of community services or the role of the cultural liaisons. Staff suggested that there be more systematic, internal communication about the work of the cultural liaisons. Specifically, respondents shared that they would like an opportunity for the cultural liaisons to share their work with other staff. Some respondents stated they would like the opportunity to participate in cultural liaison meetings. There was a desire among respondents to learn more about how the liaisons can and are working to help build bridges between community and the library.

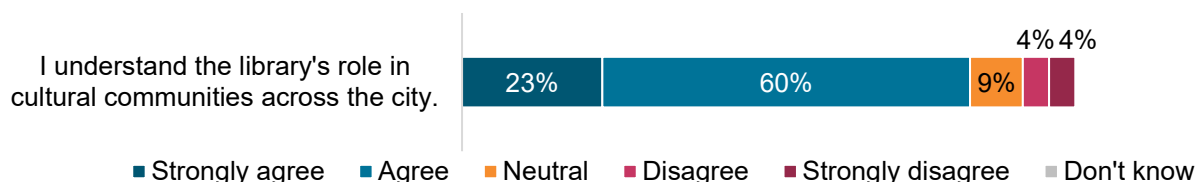
Communication in the past has been lacking when it comes to informing library staff [about] the work that cultural liaisons are doing. We will hear the result of their work, but not what they are currently working on. Therefore, it is hard to know what further services or needs there are. It would be helpful to get a monthly or quarterly summary of what the liaisons are working on: accomplishments and connections. – Library staff

I would be very interested in hearing more from the liaisons themselves, about their knowledge of our communities, their needs, and suggestions for our work, etc. – Library staff

➔ Staff understanding of the role of the library in cultural communities

Library staff have a good understanding of the role of the library among cultural communities across the city. When asked about their understanding of the role of the library, the majority of respondents (83%) reported that they understand the library's role in cultural communities across the city (Figure 17).

17. STAFF UNDERSTANDING OF THE LIBRARY'S ROLE AMONG CULTURAL COMMUNITIES (N=70)



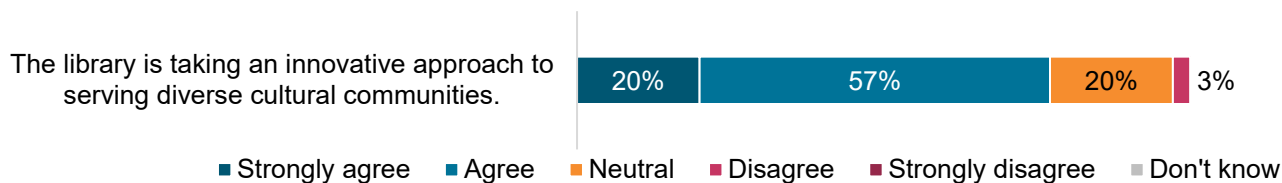
Cultural liaisons have educated library staff in ways that will improve services for patrons from Karen, Latinx, and Somali communities. In response to an open-ended question, several staff mentioned that their understanding of cultural communities, and their needs and interests, has increased. Respondents acknowledged the relevance of the cultural differences between these communities and the language barriers that are present in their day-to-day work. They discussed the need and desire to learn more and adjust the way they work to better meet the needs of these patrons.

Having worked with the liaisons and coworkers who speak these languages has helped me to recognize what languages might be being used and where to find library resources in those languages. I have learned a lot about the cultures and how those cultures fit or do not fit into American culture and how to adjust my expectations accordingly. I have more to learn. – Library staff

Because of our cultural liaisons, I have learned more about the cultures of the three different groups. This has enabled me to better understand them, as well as assist them in resources they may need. I think it is important to be able to understand where someone is coming from in order to assist them. – Library staff

The majority of library staff believe SPPL is taking an innovative approach to position the library to be responsive to and a reflection of cultural communities in Saint Paul. Establishing the cultural liaison position is a new approach to expanding community services at the library. Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) agreed that the library is taking an innovative approach to serving cultural communities (Figure 18).

18. STAFF PERCEPTION OF LIBRARY'S APPROACH TO SERVING CULTURAL COMMUNITIES (N=70)



Although the majority of respondents feel the library is taking an innovative approach to serve cultural communities, several respondents believe the library can be more creative with their services and programming. Respondents indicated a lack of certain services as well as the need to improve programming, such as providing more language-specific programming and more materials translated into multiple languages, engaging with a greater variety of age groups, co-hosting more events in partnership with community members, and providing more creative and nontraditional programming such as music or film-related activities.

*[We need] more resources and programs offered in Karen, Spanish, and Somali, especially music and film.
– Library staff*

I know this is difficult, but [we should be] attempting to make connections with the elders. Dua's Hmong elders sewing activity was a wonderful example of a great program! – Library staff

Library staff view the cultural liaisons as an essential bridge between library services and communities underrepresented at the library. Library staff were asked to share their perceptions of the role of the cultural liaisons and the value they bring to the library. Respondents spoke highly of the cultural liaisons and the work they do as part of the library and the communities they serve, and several respondents described them as a bridge between the library and communities. Staff emphasized the importance of cultural liaisons' ability to build relationships, foster a sense of belonging among community members, make the library more relevant and welcoming, and enhance community engagement and collaboration. Several respondents stated that the cultural liaisons have an in-depth understanding of the needs of communities and are skilled at providing culturally sensitive and language-specific supports and programming.

Because of [the] cultural liaisons we are seeing more and more Karen, Latinx, and Somali people utilizing our SPPL system. – Library staff

Our liaisons have been integral to connecting with community groups that are harder to reach for a variety of reasons: language barriers, cultural unfamiliarity, not knowing what libraries are, staff misunderstanding motivations, etc. Liaisons' work in introducing children to literacy is core to the SPPL's mission, and it creates a bridge for the rest of the family into the library. Our liaisons are passionate about their work and their communities and are a HUGE asset to SPPL and our city and state. They are often overworked and so much is asked of them, but they have made themselves available without complaint and work tirelessly with staff so we can be better. – Library staff

Cultural liaisons have added value to the community through their ability to go deep and form trusted relationships, and they have shown the library how to build engagement, relationships, and programming starting with communities. – Library staff

[Liaisons have] really strong new perspectives and ideas around community engagement and collaboration. I feel like many people have felt more welcomed, accepted and seen since cultural liaisons have joined the team. Our programming has become more diverse, as well. – Library staff

Goal B: Increase staff skills to work with community members

SPPL identified two intermediate outcomes for library staff that will build the skills of staff to work with community members. Year 1 findings related to the following outcomes are described in this section.



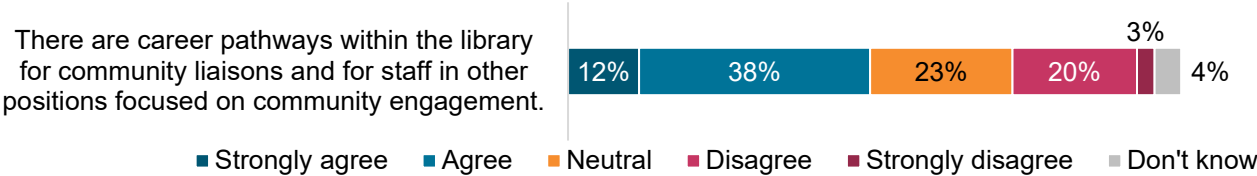
INCREASED SKILLS TO WORK WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- More career pathways within the library
- Increased job satisfaction

➡ Career pathways within the library

Perceptions of the availability of career advancement opportunities for cultural liaisons within the library vary among library staff. When asked about whether career pathways exist within the library for cultural liaisons and staff in other positions focused on community engagement, half of respondents (50%) said that opportunities exist, while nearly one-quarter of respondents (23%) did not feel this way (Figure 19).

19. STAFF PERCEPTION OF CAREER PATHWAYS WITHIN THE LIBRARY (N=69)



Although half of respondents agreed that there are career pathways within the library for cultural liaisons, several expressed the need for structural change related to hiring and staffing positions that allow for more opportunities among staff who are leading community engagement. Staff indicated a desire for more opportunities and better communication to support one another. They would also like support for employee development into higher-level positions within the library.

Hire more people from those communities and allow them room to grow into manager and other leadership roles. – Library staff

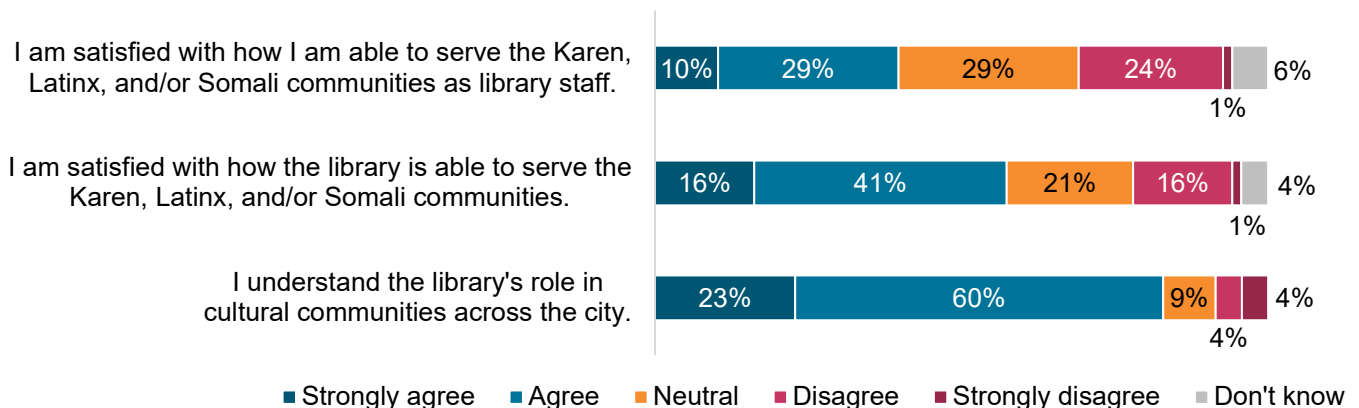
We also need structural change, difficult as it may be. The current structure of the library has MLIS [Master of Library and Information Science] degrees as a blockade creating racial, socioeconomic, and cultural divides between leadership and frontline staff. It is my opinion that the library will never be able to provide the level of exceptional community service that it is capable of unless we embrace leaders from our diverse local communities, leaders whose education comes from lived experience and community work, leaders who may not be in a financial place to pay for grad school or rack up debt. – Library staff

I know the liaisons are doing great work in reaching communities, but I don't think that is known throughout the library. They have definitely brought life to the idea of getting "beyond library walls," but it seems that the same is not adopted throughout the system. When their work is highlighted it is at a high level and not embedded in daily workflow. – Library staff

➔ Job satisfaction

The majority of library staff are unsatisfied with their ability to serve Karen, Latinx, and Somali patrons. Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with their individual ability to serve Karen, Latinx, and Somali communities and the library's ability to serve these communities. Thirty-nine percent of respondents indicated that they are satisfied with their ability as individuals to serve Karen, Latinx, and/or Somali communities at the library. One-quarter of respondents (25%) said that they “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with this statement. A higher proportion of respondents (57%) indicated satisfaction with the library's ability to serve these communities (Figure 20).

20. STAFF SATISFACTION WITH ABILITY TO SERVE CULTURAL COMMUNITIES (N=68)



Note. Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

➔ Additional opportunities for staff development and capacity building

Internal campaign and updated training for staff

Library staff desire professional development and training around how to communicate and interact with patrons with limited English proficiency. When asked about what the library can do to better serve cultural communities and patrons with limited English proficiency, respondents indicated a need for more professional development and training for staff to improve their communication with patrons, including language-specific training. Such training would allow staff to communicate more effectively and better understand how patrons would like to receive information.

We can always do better in trying to understand someone else's context; how they prefer to receive information and where, and we can do better reaching new folks and listening. – Library staff

A staff training on commonly used library words in other languages could be very useful. – Library staff

Some informal conversations with liaisons and other staff have given me valuable perspectives and context for working with the above-mentioned communities. I've experienced little to no direct official training on the topic. I feel like this more broad and direct engagement of staff is currently lacking. System-wide cultural competence should not be up to chance and individual staff members' interest and capacity. – Library staff

Hiring for staff diversity

Library staff suggest increasing diversity among staff members and integrating the cultural liaisons into the regular operations of the library as full-time, salaried positions. The most frequently suggested improvement related to expanding community services was to hire more diverse and multilingual staff across all libraries. Several respondents felt that the cultural liaison position should be a full-time and salaried position with higher wages. Staff also mentioned the desire to integrate the liaison role into the general operation of the library rather than an “add-on” or an “extra” position. Additionally, staff suggested that cultural liaisons have designated working space within the library. Some staff mentioned the desire to have more Black, Indigenous, and people of color in management roles.

Having full-time, funded, cultural liaisons would show the community that the library is invested in them and serious about wanting to serve them and their families. Having cultural liaisons at multiple libraries would also show the liaisons that they were valued as employees and help equalize the workload of all they are asked to do. – Library staff

Hire cultural liaisons at full-time capacity! Allow them to run consistent programs or participate in existing services at a fuller capacity. – Library staff

The library should have more BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) managers who can relate and work with BIPOC staff, more diverse full-time staff who can be at the libraries and not depend solely on the one liaison, and more liaisons working full time in house so they are available all day. The library should have [the liaisons] participate in decision-making roles and programming. – Library staff

Recommendations for staff activities

The following recommendations for program improvement are based on key findings and suggestions provided by library staff.

- Provide professional development opportunities aimed at building confidence and skills among library staff to serve members of cultural communities, with a special focus on serving Karen community members and residents with limited English proficiency.
- Sustainably develop more creative and nontraditional programming, informed by and co-created with community members and partners, by intentionally connecting the work of the liaisons with other teams and groups charged with system-wide programming within the library or building/strengthening partnerships for this purpose.

- Provide more language-specific programming and translated materials. For example, prioritizing co-creating programs and services with communities specifically for those communities and in their language of choice.
- Consider working with staff to understand cultural responsiveness beyond the availability of language-specific programming and resources. Communities need different approaches to feeling seen, safe, and welcome—what is a welcoming program for a family with a child in language immersion schooling is not the same as what is welcoming for a family that speaks that language at home and experiences barriers as immigrants.
- Improve internal communication via frequent updates from cultural liaisons, or establish a centralized location of cultural liaison’s work and resources for easier access.
- Fund and integrate the cultural liaison position at full-time and as a permanent position across all library branches. Additionally, consider developing career pathways for individuals in positions focused on community engagement. Providing the liaisons with their own desk space may be a symbolic and practical way to demonstrate the permanency of their role at the library.
- Review and adjust hiring practices to decrease barriers for individuals who may not meet the current educational requirements to include a wider range and diversity of experiences and expertise among staff.



Next steps for the community services model

Overall, evaluation findings support further investment and expansion of the cultural liaison position within the library. Cultural liaisons have been identified as critical connectors to the library for members of Saint Paul’s immigrant and refugee communities, and SPPL plans to improve upon this model and share the successes with other public libraries as detailed below.

- Refine the Expanding Community Services logic model based on Year 1 evaluation findings and developments during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Add a full-time Karen-speaking liaison to better serve this community in the library system. Evaluation data suggest that SPPL staff would benefit from a better understanding of Karen community needs, and Karen community members would benefit from a better understanding of the full range of library offerings.
- Expand the service model to target additional cultural communities (e.g., Hmong, Black, Native American/Indigenous), focusing on developing existing SPPL staff whenever possible.
- Create a cohort of SPPL staff working as cultural liaisons to support each other, refine and evaluate the service model, the liaison title and job descriptions, and communicate with SPPL staff more frequently.
- Finish the work of embedding liaisons in the library by updating and adding better ways for staff and community members to contact liaisons, providing the liaisons with needed equipment, securing office space, and standardizing data collection methods.
- Align programming with other city departments, most notably the city attorney’s office, to develop programming related to citizenship and immigration processes.
- Several cultural liaison positions will now be funded through the city’s general fund dollars and are considered “certified” (funded by the city) rather than “provisional” (funded by grant funds).
- Liaisons will continue community conversations, currently held virtually, to surface topics of interest.
- Community Services will support programming that promotes conversation and social cohesion (e.g., celebratory, conversation-focused events) when in-person programming is possible. Examples of past programming like this include community Iftar and Karen Family Engagement Day.
- Share this innovative service model and evaluation findings with the library services field through presentations and publications.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Saint Paul Public Library staff, including Rebecca Ryan, Phasoua Vang and the cultural liaisons – Adriana Galvan, Glaw Dee, Tansini Detpraiwan, and Hindi Abdi, for help with this project. We would also like to thank community representatives, Ana Laura Gonzales, Bway Wah, and Yasmin Muridi, for their help with data collection and language translation. Lastly, we are grateful for the library patrons and the library staff who participated in an interview or survey. Thank you to Julia Ruther from The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library for her guidance. This evaluation has been funded by grants from the Minnesota Department of Education using federal funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services Grants to States program; the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation, and by the Perrie Jones Library Fund.

The following Wilder Research staff contributed to this project:

Anna Alba
Mark Anton
Sheila Bell
Marilyn Conrad
Amanda Eggers
Rachel Fields
Alice Lubeck
Nicole MartinRogers
Dan Swanson

Wilder Research, a division of Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, is a nationally respected nonprofit research and evaluation group. For more than 100 years, Wilder Research has gathered and interpreted facts and trends to help families and communities thrive, get at the core of community concerns, and uncover issues that are overlooked or poorly understood.

451 Lexington Parkway North
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104

651-280-2700 | www.wilderresearch.org

Wilder Research®

Information. Insight. Impact.

The Saint Paul Public Library is a department of the City of Saint Paul. Comprised of 13 locations, a Bookmobile, and online library, it welcomes all people to connect, learn, discover and grow.

90 West 4th Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102
651-266-7000 | www.sppl.org



SAINT PAUL
PUBLIC LIBRARY

