

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

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

ACTIVITIES

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

LONG TERM OUTCOMES

ULTIMATE OUTCOMES

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.**

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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)