

**LSTA Grant Project Evaluation**  
**“Promoting Targeted Library Services to Latinos”**  
**Cornelius Public Library**  
Prepared by John Hunter, MLIS, May 18, 2009

**Summary**

The Cornelius Public Library serves the residents of Cornelius, Oregon, as well as surrounding areas of Washington County. The area is notable for being heavily Latino (40 percent according to 2006 U.S. Census Bureau statistics) and for being designated as economically distressed. The library used its LSTA Grant to hire staff and develop methods of outreach to expand services specifically targeted to Latinos. The library also modified its existing policies, procedures, and collection development strategies to further its grant-related goals.

Through the grant, the library was able to reach out to more than 3,000 potential library users, as well as existing patrons. Through its promotional efforts, the library worked with 17 unique community agencies and developed lasting relationships that will continue to benefit the library. The library increased its collection of Spanish-language materials, shifted their location on the shelves, and saw a significant increase in their use. Finally, the City of Cornelius expanded its support of the library by increasing two paid staff from part-time to full-time, including a bilingual/bicultural staff member who will spend approximately one-third of her time furthering the library's outreach efforts in the future.

**Project Objectives**

- The Cornelius Public Library specified five objectives in its grant application:
1. Establish a relationship with nine local agencies currently serving Latinos by April 2008.
  2. Develop three promotional methods to effectively reach Latinos by July 2008.
  3. Incorporate bilingual and bicultural aspects into regular services and programs.
  4. Improve Spanish-language collection development procedures.
  5. Create library procedures and a directory of resources to make changes permanent and lasting.

**Project Method**

In the first quarter of the one-year grant, the library created a Latino outreach coordinator position and promoted an existing part-time staff member to fill it. The Latino outreach coordinator and library director developed a systematic strategy to reach out to existing community organizations serving Latinos and created joint programs to promote library services to these organizations' clientele. At least nine programs were scheduled with as many organizations in the first quarter, and a similar pace of programming was kept throughout the grant cycle. The library developed and continued to maintain through the grant cycle a community organization resource that contains contact information for each group, a calendar of their significant events and opportunities for collaboration, as well as a log that details the responses from each organization. The library used grant funds and additional funds received from the Meyer Memorial Trust in the first quarter and Amo Leer in the fourth quarter to significantly increase its Spanish-language materials collection. Finally, the library made permanent organizational changes that resulted in increased staffing including bilingual/bicultural staff, increased programming in a bilingual format, and a changed methodology for the purchase and maintenance of its Spanish-language collection.

## **Project Results**

The library has developed significant, lasting relationships with 17 local organizations that will pay dividends for years to come. As of March 31, 2009, the library had served 1,066 people through 45 outreach programs and had served an additional 2,155 people at information tables at an additional 19 programs.

The library experimented with a range of methods for promoting its programming. While distributing fliers at schools only met with limited success, surveys conducted at a bilingual program indicated that many families plan their activities based on the activities calendar in *The Oregonian* newspaper. Respondents also stated a preference for fliers distributed in the library. Word-of-mouth, while not a formal tool, also proved to be essential to getting word out about library programming.

Library services were adapted and enhanced to make them much friendlier to Latino patrons. Most promotional materials and library signage were converted to a bilingual format. Through this grant and Meyer Memorial Trust and Amo Leer grants, the library was able to purchase more than \$20,000 worth of Spanish-language materials.

Shelving was purchased and the adult and juvenile Spanish-language collections were collocated to encourage multigenerational use. The percentage of the budget spent on Spanish-language materials was permanently increased. Finally, the library permanently increased its bilingual/bicultural staff to offer increased assistance throughout the library and a better feeling of inclusiveness and welcome for its Latino patrons. The library outreach coordinator function will be incorporated into a new full-time position with 30 percent of her time spent specifically on outreach functions.

The library's increased purchase of Spanish-language materials led to the development of a collection development policy pertaining to the acquisition of these materials. The library worked with new vendors and tracked prices to ensure maximum value. The library purchased new types of materials not previously found on its shelves, such as juvenile book/media kits and adult serials that are popular in Mexico. Materials were collocated in a "multicultural" area that allows parents and children to find books side-by-side. Labeling strategies were implemented to make individual categories of books (e.g. independent readers) more obvious.

Finally, the library developed and continues to use a comprehensive outreach database that will allow it to be both proactive and efficient in its outreach efforts. The tool contains a list of contacts at local partner organizations, a calendar of the organizations' typical programming, and an ongoing log of the results of each collaboration.

### **Project Impact**

The Cornelius Public Library and the City of Cornelius have made many permanent changes as a result of having received their LSTA grant. Consequently, the effects of the grant will be felt for years, if not decades, to come. The library has increased two positions (library director and library assistant/outreach coordinator) from part-time to full-time. The library has made a permanent commitment to spending more of its materials budget on Spanish-language materials. Most importantly, the library has forged relationships with community organizations that share a mission of service to the local community and with the thousands of residents that are served by them. As Maria, the Latino outreach coordinator shared in our interview, "A lot of the time patrons just want to know that you'll work with them and be flexible with them. They just want to see

a friendly face.” Latino residents of Cornelius can be assured well into the future that these are the qualities they will encounter in their public library. The efforts of the staff at the Cornelius Public Library should serve as a model for how other small libraries with large Latino populations might better serve that segment of their own communities, and in fact, the library is now a valuable resource within its member cooperative (Washington County Cooperative Library Service) for the provision of materials, services, and educational strategies targeted to this growing population.

### **Suggestions for the Future**

From this observer's point of view, the Cornelius Public Library and its staff have done a remarkable job of implementing its grant and meeting the objectives established in it. Staff has expressed a desire to continue to develop innovative outreach programs beyond those already attempted, such as a language exchange. Further, there is a desire to offer a Spanish-language version of the library's website, as well as a Spanish-language translation of some of the library's more minor policies. The library is also committed to seeking further grants to expand the library's collection and the level of service it can provide. I would encourage them to pursue all of these.

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