



LIBRARIES
Lead the Way

*Community
Engagement and
Facilitation Skills*

December 2016
Team Progress Update

Introduction

Since attending Libraries Lead the Way in-person trainings in September and October, participating libraries have been working on a wide range of projects. Some teams are using convening and facilitation skills internally, to improve culture and services in their libraries. Others are building relationships with external partners, working collaboratively to plan community gatherings and conversations. While each library's context is unique, all teams are using the training to effect positive change in their libraries and communities. This document provides:

- **Project Highlights:** Examples of how teams have used the training internally and externally so far
- **Continued Skill-Building:** Some of the issues, tips and techniques that have come up in our training calls
- **Supports Moving Forward:** An outline of training next steps

About the Project

The **Libraries Lead the Way** community engagement and facilitation skills training was developed in response to requests by libraries in the NorthNet Library System and Pacific Library Partnership Library System. It is part of a larger movement in which libraries are more proactively engaging their communities to adapt their services to changing social networks, as well as digital networks. Jacquie Brinkley is the project coordinator (Brinkley@plpinfo.net). Training and coaching are provided by Common Knowledge Group (www.ckgroup.org).



LIBRARY TEAMS FOR 2016-2017

Alameda County Library	Napa County Library	Siskiyou County Library	Tehama County Library
Butte County Library	San Rafael Public Library	Solano County Library	Yolo County Library
Lincoln Public Library	Shasta Public Libraries	Sonoma County Library	



Solano County Library staff pose for a photo during the community conversation they hosted at the October 26–27 workshop.

Using the Training Internally

Many libraries have already used the participatory meeting concepts and facilitation techniques covered in *Libraries Lead the Way* inside their own libraries. As one librarian put it, "Several teams recognized the need to turn inward before turning outward." Teams are planning more collaboratively, engaging their colleagues in new ways and working to shift library culture.

TEAM PROFILE

Coordinating services across 12 branches

Team: Siskiyou County Library

In rural Siskiyou County, where volunteers run many of the branches, the library plays an especially important role connecting residents with technology and library materials. Staff from Siskiyou discussed an external conversation about technology, but recognized the need to first improve coordination and services between their branches. To begin the conversation, team members recently brought together staff from 12 branches to talk about the library service model. Ahead of the meeting, team members worked with staff from each branch to establish shared baseline information to help develop clear goals moving forward.

TEAM PROFILE

Planning training collaboratively

Team: Shasta Public Libraries

Team members used the training internally to collaboratively plan their staff day. About 24 library staff members broke out into four tables and did a World Café-style conversation. They responded to the questions "What did you like or dislike about previous staff days?" and "What do you want to get out of the coming staff day?" The staff also used sticker voting to identify the most popular ideas. Feedback was very positive and staff expressed appreciation at the ability to help design the upcoming staff day.

Examples Inside the Library

- **Alameda County Library** public information specialist Alicia Reyes successfully pitched the idea of a branch-by-branch community connector list to the library's executive team. While the form is still taking shape, the team would like to create a template that is easy to use and could allow each branch to visualize their community connections. These connections could then be placed in a database or central depository accessible to all residents.
- **Butte County Library** has used the training during a children's staff meeting and a meeting of the library's publicity team. Team members plan to continue practicing their facilitation skills during staff meetings.
- After conducting the October 26 evening Community Conversation for our Fairfield workshop, the **Solano County Library** Literacy Team has been tapped to help lead staff conversations about the system's strategic plan development.

Community Connections

- **Tehama County Library** is planning a holiday community event to build support for its new library in Red Bluff and encourage positive dialogue in the community. The event will be the jumping off point for larger efforts to improve relationships between city and county leaders.
- **Napa County Library** is launching an 18-month community outreach effort with support of the Harwood Institute. Staff will facilitate a range of small-group conversations with members of the community that will eventually inform a comprehensive strategic planning update.
- **San Rafael Public Library** is planning different kinds of conversations with school partners and education stakeholders that complement their library card initiative.
- **Solano County Library** is continuing to build relationships with community partners and exploring additional ways for adult learners to practice speaking in community settings.
- **Alameda County Library's** San Lorenzo branch is reaching out to new partners and stakeholders in the community, including going to housing complexes.
- The **Sonoma County Library** team has two members new to the library. As a first step, they are attending events with stakeholders to better understand how the library fits into the community landscape.

Applying the Training in the Community

Many teams have also been building valuable partnerships and planning meaningful conversations in their communities. Teams throughout NorthNet and PLP have applied training concepts to better engage patrons and community members. Information gained through these exchanges has been invaluable to some teams and already led to impacts in the community.



In Winters, a conversation was started with sticky notes. This is an example of inviting bilingual input in a casual, but effective way.

TEAM PROFILE

Responding to community needs

Team: Yolo County Library

When their original plan to hold a conversation on housing changed direction, the team from Yolo County quickly shifted to another relevant topic: supporting teens. Following the national election, teens attending the Winters branch confided in a librarian that they have encountered hostile comments at school about "packing their bags" and "moving back to Mexico." Since Winters is a community that is roughly 60 percent Latino, these type of comments have been particularly anxiety-inducing. To help reduce current tensions and build community, the team is planning on holding a conversation with help from several partners. The topic will likely be "How do we create a safe community for all teens in Winters?" and will seek to build upon the library's positive outreach efforts conducted at Festival de la Comunidad in Winters earlier this fall.

TEAM PROFILE

Engaging the community to support teens

Team: Lincoln Public Library

Although it provides a wide range of supports and programs, the Lincoln library has a special connection to students. The library offers daily homework help during the school year and has been building its teen advisory board. To help create a more supportive community for teens, Lincoln Public Library is convening a diverse group of partners and community members for an upcoming conversation. Team members are working closely with their local school district and the district's librarian. They have also identified several potential partners including, the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Police department, the Parks & Recreation Department and the Axiom, a local faith-based youth center. The team also plans to engage teens in the planning process and train teens to help facilitate the conversation.

Continued skill-building

While nearly all teams have taken positive steps toward completing their projects, as anticipated, teams have also made adjustments and edits to their plans, as well. During coaching phone calls, it became clear that many teams have encountered common challenges. The ways in which teams have responded to these challenges have been inspiring and help to illustrate how the library can play a unique role in helping to build community.



The Shasta Public Libraries planned and hosted an evening community conversation for the first workshop, Sept 27–28 in Redding.

Responding to national election tensions

Many library staff have been encountering patrons expressing election-related stress and anxiety. In response to these concerns, some libraries have opted to take action, holding community conversations and immigration information sessions. Others are grappling with what role the library should play. What is clear is that the library's position, as a trusted and neutral ally in the community, offers a unique opportunity to assist with healing and community building. Simply giving community members the opportunity to share their feelings in a safe, supportive setting goes a long way to diffusing tension.

Practicing facilitation

The best way to build comfort with facilitation skills is to practice. Many teams have shared examples of how they are weaving more participatory conversations into routine tasks. When presenting out in the community, facilitating small group discussions or simply engaging patrons in conversation, team members have been able to continue building their skills as facilitators. Some tips that came out of the follow-up calls included:

Pose an open-ended question

Engage community members in talking about what they care about. Ask them to reflect on a question about the future of their community. This can be done in one-on-one interactions or when facilitating a group discussion.

Use small groups

Creating occasions for people to talk in small groups or pairs increases dialogue and trust. When presenting outside the library, add in a "Think, Pair, Share" or small group question for people to share their thoughts and feelings.

Use everyday opportunities

Interacting with patrons, leading staff meetings or presenting to partner organizations are all excellent ways to build facilitation skills. Start from a place that is comfortable for you.

CommonKnowledge

www.ckgroup.org

Supports moving forward

As the Libraries Lead the Way program moves into 2017, we'll keep you up-to-date with the following supports:

Winter webinar

The Common Knowledge team is reaching out this week to schedule a winter webinar. All teams will be invited to share their project progress and any photos or materials that help tell their story. The session will also include additional training on question design, partner roles and other topics identified by the teams in our calls and via a short survey.

Dedicated website

The NorthNet website will be creating a dedicated page for the project. We will be posting PDFs of the tools we've shared and other resources you've asked for. Let us know what else would be helpful.

Ongoing coaching and support

If teams have any questions or would like additional help as they move to the planning and implementation phases, please contact Program Manager William Cooley at wcooley@ckgroup.org.