



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 2013

TO: Institute for Museum and Library Services

FROM: Erin Chernisky
Fairfax County Public Library

SUBJECT: Operational Guidelines for Nationwide Implementation of Grant RE-03-08-009,
An American Future: Library Service Opportunities for Immigrant Youth

Following are the Operational Guidelines for Nationwide Implementation of Grant RE-03-08-009, *An American Future: Library Service Opportunities for Immigrant Youth*.

This grant, which began in July 2008 and ended in October 2012, placed 95 immigrant youth in internships with the Fairfax County Public Library.

The guidelines that follow represent an outline of the process followed by the Fairfax County Public Library and our partner organization, Liberty's Promise, to implement this successful program. Other library systems intending to implement similar programs can glean ideas and suggestions to create a roadmap for themselves.

Samples of materials used in the *An American Future* program, such as applications and surveys can be found in the final report, available on our web site.

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Operational Guidelines for Nationwide Implementation
An American Future: Library Service Opportunities for Immigrant Youth
IMLS Grant RE-03-08-009

I. Establish Program Parameters

Eligibility

Determine what will be required for interns to participate in the program. For *An American Future*, eligibility requirements included:

- 15-21 years of age;
- Immigrant or child of two immigrant parent;
- From a low-income household, according to HUD federal guidelines;
- Moderate to high level of English fluency;
- Legally eligible to work in the United States

Length of Service

Determine the length of service for an internship. For *An American Future*, internships were 10 weeks and interns worked 10-20 weeks during the school year or 20-40 weeks during the summer.

Stipend

Determine stipend amount. For *An American Future*, stipend amount was \$80/week (eventually supplemented and raised to \$100/week).

II. Recruitment of Youth

Recruitment of candidates is key to an effective intern program. Recruitment begins with a targeted approach that reaches the intended audience. Next, prospective candidates need to be assessed and screened with careful consideration given to ones that show potential for becoming successful interns.

Library systems should carefully consider if they have the time and resources to dedicate to this endeavor. For *An American Future*, the Fairfax County Public Library partnered with a nonprofit organization, Liberty's Promise, who already had the expertise and experience need to carry-out an effective targeted recruitment campaign.

Interns can be recruited through flyers at libraries; schools (counselors, parent liaisons, career center staff and social workers); word of mouth; and through social service providers.

III. Vetting

Interns must complete several items before being considered for placement. For *An American Future*, simply submitting an application was not a guarantee of an internship. This was a competitive process with final decision on whether or not to hire an intern determined by the library.

Required Forms

1. Paper Application

In addition to basic demographic information and work/education history, consider including the following questions: immigration information, economic eligibility, languages spoken, other interests/activities, preferred work location, availability, how they heard about the program, reasons for wanting an internship, educational and career goals.

2. Photo Release

3. Emergency Contact Information

4. Eligibility Verification

For *An American Future*, candidates were required to submit:

- Birth Date/Age Verification
- Proof for US Citizenship or Work Authorization
- Economic Eligibility Verification
- Proof of Immigrant Background

Job Skills Workshop

For many young immigrants, this internship will be their first experience applying for a job and working in a professional setting. The purpose of a job skills workshop is to guide interns through the process of writing a resume and cover letter as well as preparing and practicing for an interview. For *An American Future*, these workshops lasted 2-4 hours and were done either with a group or one-on-one. The following activities and information were included:

- Pre-internship surveys
- Introduction activities for youth to meet their peers, and for youth to engage with program staff
- Basic information about the internship process
- Discussion on why internships are important
- How to apply for the internship (i.e. how to submit your cover letter and resume to the library)
- Considering your first impression (appropriate e-mail addresses and voicemail messages)

- Tips on what to do while waiting to hear back from a library, accepting an internship, preparing for an internship, and what to do after your internship to use your experience to your advantage
- Advice from past supervisors on how to have a successful internship
- Electronic etiquette in the workplace
- Goal-Setting
- Explanations of time sheets and getting “paid”
- Working one-on-one with a professional to write a resume and a cover letter
- Practicing an interview

IV. Library Staff Engagement

While the intern vetting process is going on, library staff need to be preparing for interns as well. For *An American Future*, the library’s Volunteer Program Manager along with staff from Liberty’s Promise held a workshop to introduce the program. Representatives from each of the library’s 23 branches were in attendance. Topics covered included:

- Program Goals
- Introduction of Liberty’s Promise
- Vetting Process for Interns
- Expectations of Library Staff (see section VI)
- Support Provided by Liberty’s Promise (see section VI)
- Working with Immigrant Youth
- Next Steps

Following the workshop, library staff completed a form indicating their interest in participating. These forms were then used to match potential interns with library branches.

V. Intern Placement

For *An American Future*, after Liberty’s Promise matched an intern with a library, the candidate interns then communicated with the library directly, sending a cover letter and resume and scheduling an interview. Following the interview, library staff had the option of hiring or not hiring the candidates.

VI. The Internship

Following the offering and acceptance of an internship, the intern begins work at their assigned location. For *An American Future* to be successful, the intern, library staff and Liberty's Promise had certain roles and responsibilities.

Expectations of Library Staff

- Assign a staff member to supervise the intern
- Work with the intern to establish their work schedule
- Conduct on-the-job training as necessary
- Provide meaningful work assignments
- Supervise the intern
- Keep track of the interns hours and approve time sheets
- Meet with Liberty's Promise staff for a mid-point evaluation
- Complete a final evaluation of the intern
- Keep Liberty's Promise staff apprised of any issues or concerns

Expectations of Liberty's Promise Staff

- Assure all candidates have been prescreened and have all completed all necessary paperwork
- Match interns with placements, considering geography, transportation, and library needs
- Maintain weekly contact with interns throughout their internship and alert library staff of any issues or concerns
- Process intern time sheets and issue stipend checks
- Meet with Library staff for a mid-point evaluation

Expectations of Interns

- Fully complete a 10-week internship
- Fulfill the required hourly time commitment
- Arrange transportation to and from the internship
- Act in a professional manner
- Accept guidance and training from their supervisor
- Be prompt and alert supervisor if a change in schedule is necessary
- Keep track of hours and complete time sheet and allowance procedures
- Complete pre-entrance and exit surveys as well as a post internship evaluation

VII. Intern Field Trips

Throughout the duration of the project, staff determined that the impact of the internships could be increased if the interns had a chance to meet each other and to share experiences. With the Library of Congress minutes away, project staff set up two summer field trips to tour the Library and to meet with Library of Congress staff. These trips encouraged youth to consider how their internship fit into a County-wide project, and further, how library work extends beyond a community library.

VIII. Project Promotion

Both the Fairfax County Public Library and Liberty's Promise worked to promote the *An American Future* program. Examples include articles in library publications, presenting at a conference, and information on both organizations' web site. Some interns were also asked to maintain a blog about their experiences.

IX. Project Evaluation

Evaluators from George Mason University (GMU) were hired to assist with the evaluation process. In order to determine outcomes, interns completed pre- and post- surveys, and a final evaluation. Liberty's Promise staff completed a mid-term site visit form and library supervisors completed a final evaluation. A small number of interns also participated in a focus group. These documents were analyzed and compiled by the team at GMU into a final evaluation, which can be found in the final report, available on our web site.