PROGRAM DESCRIPTION
The New Jersey Library Association's Access Navigators Program is funded through the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds, received by New Jersey State Library (NJSL), through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). This program will provide trained library staff to serve as access navigators working within public libraries to help meet the needs of those displaced during the pandemic. NJ libraries are invited to apply to have an access navigator work in their library.

The coronavirus pandemic magnified the disparities between information haves and have-nots, thereby making it imperative to mitigate these widening gaps. As such, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access has taken on a new and urgent prominence, in the articulation of a post COVID-19 environment. In today’s technology-driven knowledge economy, digital access and literacy has become a survival skill, with a major impact on our community’s quality of life.

Many New Jersey residents, who do not have computers in their homes, connectivity, or the basic and digital literacy skills needed to thrive in a digital landscape, are significantly disenfranchised today.

NJ’s public libraries have long been an extensive, if informal, network serving the state’s unemployed and underemployed. Through the expertise of trained information professionals, combined with access to extensive resources, we prepare people to seek jobs, connect job seekers to required training, and provide support and resources for the entire family during the process. New Jersey’s public libraries are effectively positioned to serve these needs and to mitigate these gaps, however, the majority of our libraries struggle with budget, space and staffing to address these emergent and compelling needs.

The New Jersey Economic Task Force (NJLA) surveyed public libraries in New Jersey to identify the top challenges of serving the recovery needs in their communities. The results identified Lack of Staff Time as the chiefly reported challenge at 71% of libraries pre-pandemic. The second most cited challenge was Difficulty Reaching Into the Communities, at 54%. Introducing Access Navigators into New Jersey libraries would be instrumental in eliminating these challenges. Access Navigators will be the following:

- State-Level managed but deployed at the local/regional level
- Consist of a Coordinator and up to five (5) Navigators with three (3) client libraries each
- Deployed through consideration of key metrics to enhance equality of access
• Provide impactful skills to at-risk populations in support of economic recovery through programming and consultation to local populations in coordination with the local public library and local workforce development partners.

The Access Navigators Program offers a creative and innovative strategy for addressing and mitigating access needs within our communities. Libraries participating in this program will house and support Access Navigators, who will serve as the connective tissue for equality in economic recovery in their communities. The Access Navigators are mobile and will have defined dates and times that they are present at each participating library location. This enables our libraries to extend their reach and to serve community needs, without growing their budgets.

Roles and Responsibilities - NJLA
NJLA will hire and support 5 or more Access Navigators. A program coordinator will oversee the work of the Access Navigators who will be trained on how to conduct individual assessments and to assist program participants in creating a roadmap for achieving their goals. Once an individual plan (roadmap) is created with a program participant, the Navigators will guide the participant to the resources that they need to accomplish the goals defined in their plan.

Access Navigators will be provided:
• Laptop
• Mileage Stipend

Roles and Responsibilities - Shared
The Access Navigators Program is a partnership with local public libraries to leverage resources directed towards achieving the participants’ goals. Shared resources are inclusive of, but not limited to:
• Digital and Basic Literacy Training Resources
• Broadband access (connectivity and devices)
• Job Search and Job Training Programs
• Business startup resources and tools
• Wrap around services that may inhibit a participant’s success in the program
• Access to health information for physical and emotional well being

Participating libraries with Access Navigators and Coordinator will:
• Coordinate schedules between Access Navigators and assigned libraries
• Collect statistics for reporting project success

Roles and Responsibilities - Participants
• Host Access Navigators on specified days per week
• Provide Access Navigators workspace, connectivity, and necessary equipment
• Facilitate introductions to community partners and service providers
• Assist with program promotion and community awareness of the program
• Provide Access Navigators with a library card to access databases and resources remotely, with the understanding that licenses are restricted to library’s own patrons and not for use with other libraries
• Assist in the overall assessment and evaluation of the project
Eligible Participants
Libraries interested in participating must be public libraries in New Jersey. Multibranch libraries are limited to one branch/location as a project participant.

Program Period
The program runs from October 4, 2021 through August 31, 2022.

Important Dates

<table>
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<tr>
<td>August 16, 2021</td>
<td>Application Opens</td>
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<td>August 20, 2021</td>
<td>Q&amp;A Zoom Session</td>
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<td>September 17, 2021</td>
<td>Application Deadline</td>
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<td>September 20-24, 2021</td>
<td>Review of Applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 30, 2021</td>
<td>Announcement and Notification of Program Participants</td>
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Application Questions
Applicants with questions in advance of the due date may email questions to jmachie@njla.org

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Region 1: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Sussex, Warren, Passaic
Region 2: Mercer, Somerset, Middlesex, Monmouth, Union, Hunterdon
Region 3: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cumberland, Salem, Cape May, Gloucester, Ocean

Application Criteria
Navigators will be assigned to public libraries through a competitive application process that will be judged on the following criteria:

- Project Description 40%
- Economic Impact 40%
- Service Need 20%

Project Description (40%)
The Project Narrative seeks to fully understand the applicant’s unique characteristics that make it a truly great fit for the Access Navigator Program. Answers to the questions listed below, will be used to evaluate the narrative.
Program Questions:
- What is the need in your community? Use data and statistics as appropriate.
- What populations do you hope to target through the Access Navigator’s work
- How will you support the Navigator’s work with local resources?
- What local partners does your library currently work with to address digital literacy, workforce development, business development, and other needs? How do you currently work with them? How do you envision the Access Navigator program expanding or enhancing local partnerships?
- How will you market the Access Navigator Program to your and neighboring communities?
- How would your library incorporate what you learn from the Access Navigator to allow your library to continue these services once the Access Navigator leaves?
- Is your library able to provide the Access Navigator with access to:
  - Equipment such as a scanner, fax machine, and printer
  - Wifi or wired connectivity
  - Library card for utilizing digital resources remotely
  - A phone
  - Private workspace for one-on-one patron appointments
  - Training/onboarding for library-specific resources, services, and facilities

A ranking of all the narrative’s will yield an overall rank for the final adjudication.

**Economic Impact (40%)**
Economic recovery is rarely equal for all areas. To ensure that our Navigators are deployed to the areas most impacted by the pandemic, the following metrics will be used to score Economic Impact:

- Local Unemployment Rate for the 3-month period ending June 30, 2021 (Higher the rate, higher the score).
- Median local household income for the most recent fiscal year (Lower the median income higher the score).

The metric would be expressed as a ranking of all applicants using the following formula:

\[ \text{Ranking Unemployment Rate} + \text{Ranking of Median Household Income} = \text{Overall Rank} \]

**Service Need (20%)**
Service Need is defined by how well a community is served by degreed professional librarians as expressed by the total number of these positions available. This would be expressed using the following formula.

\[ \frac{\text{Total FTE Library Degreed Professionals}}{\text{Total Library Population}} = \text{Ranking for Service Need} \]

**Final Ranking**
To achieve a final ranking of the public libraries for participation in the Access Navigator Program, we would use the following formula.

\[ \text{Economic Impact Ranking} \times 40\% + \text{Description Ranking} \times 40\% + \text{Service Need} \times 20\% = \text{Total Weighted Ranking} \]
All candidates would be ranked from lowest to highest with the highest 15 libraries being the target institutions for year one of the program. In order to assure statewide impact and to properly gauge the future planning of this project, our goal will be to place at least three participant libraries in the geographic regions listed below:

**Region 1:** Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Sussex, Warren, Passaic  
**Region 2:** Mercer, Somerset, Middlesex, Monmouth, Union, Hunterdon  
**Region 3:** Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cumberland, Salem, Cape May, Gloucester, Ocean

**APPLICATION**

Application due date: by 6:00pm on September 17, 2021  
Application available at [https://forms.gle/nYpxe3Z5jCa5AUAD9](https://forms.gle/nYpxe3Z5jCa5AUAD9)

**QUESTION & ANSWER OPPORTUNITY**

There will be a Question and Answer Session on Friday, August 20th at 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM.

Register in advance for this meeting:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckduisqT4iGdQk_uXhXjQ7Q-cFQ0dyC8yJ](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckduisqT4iGdQk_uXhXjQ7Q-cFQ0dyC8yJ)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

For questions, please email [imachie@njla.org](mailto:imachie@njla.org) or [dave@bccls.org](mailto:dave@bccls.org)

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