

B&ECPL Increasing Resources in Libraries Grant Request

Lackawanna Public Library

The Lackawanna Public Library is seeking funding to address patrons needs, increase access and engagement, and support early literacy development in our community. We would like to address three areas of need specifically—accessibility, technology, and developing early literacy skills through play and engagement. We are requesting a total of \$13,305 to purchase items that will support these areas of need as detailed in the following narrative.

According to the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, the Lackawanna Public Library is located in a community with a poverty rate of 21.5%, significantly higher than the poverty rate for the County of Erie (13.2%). This community, once vibrant and thriving during the era of steel manufacturing, has struggled to fully recover when that industry left the area. The Lackawanna Public Library facility is over 100 years old and needs a great deal of investment of funds and planning to bring it to a state where it can truly meet the needs of the community. As this grant does not address facility needs, we are asking for items that will help support community needs without facility changes.

Increasing Access and Engagement

The City of Lackawanna has a high concentration of people over the age of 65 at 16.2% (2022 ACS data), and a high concentration of people with disabilities at 18% (2022 ACS data). Because our facility was built over 100 years ago, it was not designed with mobility issues in mind. Although we do have a functioning lift to transport patrons between levels, there can still be challenges in navigating our building for those who may have mobility issues or tire easily. To help patrons with these issues, we would like to purchase three rolling walkers to store near the lift on each level of the building. Patrons can use these while in the library if needed. Additionally, we do not have a wheelchair in the facility in case of medical emergency or, again, mobility issues. This is a much needed purchase that can help when responding to a medical issue prior to first responders arriving on scene.

Our existing computer desks in the public area are ADA-compliant, but are not movable or height adjustable. This presents challenges for those who may be using a more custom-designed mobility device that is not at a standard height. To help address this need, we would like to purchase two adjustable-height computer desks to place in the hallway between the adult and children's areas for users that may have a need for a more flexible computer desk height. An additional simple fix to help anyone with mobility or strength issues is to purchase rolling book browsing carts. This will, undoubtedly, be a popular addition for families browsing for a cart full of picture books or readers as well.

Although we do have some assistive technology for those with visual impairments already on our public-access computers, we do not have any standalone items that can help users magnify or read text on our library materials while in the library. We would like to purchase one RUBY 10 with speech video magnifier for in-library use. This will help patrons with vision difficulties who may want to read magazines, the Buffalo News, or browse through books while in the library. This may also help some of our English language learners as the device will read text aloud in addition to providing text magnification.

If you drill down into the percentage of the population in Lackawanna that has a disability using the 2022 ACS 5-year data, you can see that 14.7% under the age of 65 also have a disability. According to the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report from March 23, 2023, one in every 36 children have been identified as having autism spectrum disorder. In our community, we see families that are working hard to support their children through these differences and we must provide ways for them to engage and enjoy our public library spaces. The design of our facility is not very sensory friendly as of now and we would like to add a sensory hideaway to our children's room. Additionally, we would like to purchase and assemble four calm boxes for in-library use. These calm boxes would include fidget toys, noise-reducing earphones, and visual communication cards. All of these options may help parents and caregivers to make a possibly overstimulating visit to the library more soothing and enjoyable.

Immediate Technology Needs

Two immediate technology needs present themselves in our library currently. Our public-use scanner gets a lot of use, especially by our Lackawanna Historical Association members as they use it to digitize memorabilia and any items or articles of local significance. Our current scanner is reaching the end of its reasonable useful life and is currently not providing very clear or straight results on items that are scanned. We would like to purchase a new Epson Perfection V850 Pro flatbed scanner to help alleviate these issues for our patrons.

We have had many patrons request additional places to charge their devices. We currently only have a few locations where patrons can plug in comfortably and, if another patron is using those spots, it is difficult to find ports for charging. We would like to purchase two mobile rolling charging towers that can be moved throughout the library for easier access to charging for patrons.

Developing Early Literacy Skills through Play

Public libraries have taken on the task of supporting early literacy development for decades, if not centuries, now. If not storytime at the public library, or an endless landscape of vocabulary introduced through picture books and early readers, the library has welcomed families and introduced their youngest members to the joy of reading and a world of possibilities. This work is fundamental and increasingly important as we lose more and more time spent unplugged to screen time. It is essential that public libraries also provide a place for the youngest learners to play, develop, and learn in addition to print-based literacy and learning. Social emotional learning is just as important as we still face the challenge of recovering from the isolation of a worldwide pandemic. In the words of two contemporary American psychologists, Kathy Hersh-Pasek and Roberta Golinkoff, "Play is the primary way children were designed to learn." Play is serious stuff and we must allow for opportunities to play within our public library spaces.

At the Lackawanna Public Library, we are lucky enough to have dedicated volunteers that help us by shopping garage sales for gently-used toys and donating them to our play spaces. They not only donate them, they clean and organize them weekly. What a treasure we find in the dedicated members of our communities! As wonderful as this is, we would like to purchase some new items to promote play, early literacy development, social-emotional learning and family engagement at the Lackawanna Public Library.

We would like to purchase a light table with letter, number, and shape manipulatives, a LEGO wall, a freestanding magnetic dry erase board with magnetic letters, and flexible, stackable, washable floor seating that can be used to create comfy seating throughout the children's space and community room. Additionally, we have a gorgeous backyard here at the Lackawanna Public Library and would like to encourage outdoor play in the warmer months. We would like to purchase an outdoor reading arbor with a canopy and two water play tables at different heights to encourage play and learning in our wonderful back yard. Children need more time in nature and the calming effects of such time on our brains have been proven through research. Let's find ways to encourage this at our libraries!

Conclusion

Third spaces where community can gather without any financial obligation continue to decline in our society. It is vital that libraries, while continuing the traditional library services, also evolve to support our communities as a hub of connection, learning, and engagement. Investing in these areas of need—increasing access, updating technology, and developing early literacy and social emotional learning through play--at the Lackawanna Public Library will help us do this important work and to continue to build community and connection. Lackawanna residents deserve the opportunity for lifelong learning at their public library!

References

Play quotes. The Strong National Museum of Play. (2024, October 18).
<https://www.museumofplay.org/about/play-quotes/>

U.S. Census Bureau quickfacts: Lackawanna City, New York. (n.d.).
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lackawannacitynewyork/PST045222>

Proposed Timeline

March - May 2025: Confirm pricing with vendors, confirm ordering process, work with Business Office as needed, place orders

June – August 2025: Receive orders and arrange items in space(s), assemble items as needed

September 2025: Project complete, submit final report

Budget

RUBY 10 with speech video magnifier	\$1980.00
Adjustable height computer desks (2 @ \$127.99 ea)	\$255.98
Medline ultralight rollator (3 @ \$77.06 ea)	\$231.18
Medline folding wheelchair	\$164.99
Rolling shopping baskets (set of 6)	\$205.00
Sensory Hideaway w/ cushion	\$1368.99
Components for Calm Boxes (4)	
Rubbermaid tubs (4 @ \$8.495 ea)	\$33.98
Noise-canceling headphones (4 @ \$12.495 ea)	\$49.98
Communication cards (4 @ \$18.75 ea)	\$75.00
Sensory mats set	\$13.95
Assorted fidget toys	\$61.96
Epson Perfection V850 Pro Scanner	\$1299.00
LUXOR Mobile Charging Towers (2 @ \$266.95 ea)	\$533.90
Activity Wall (LEGO)	\$229.98
Large Light Table (quoted price includes shipping and delivery)	\$809.95
Translucent Letters/Numbers	\$40.47
Magnatiles 100-piece set	\$119.99
Standup Magnetic Dry Erase Center	\$189.00

Giant magnetic letters	\$35.98
Magnetic gears	\$29.99
Flex Space comfy floor seats (8 @ \$69.99 ea)	\$559.92
Outdoor reading arbor with canopy	\$1995.00
18" Height Water Play Table with storage	\$1465.00
24" Height Water Play Table with storage	\$1555.00
<hr/>	
Total for Project	\$13,304.19
Grant Request	\$13,305.00

Budgeted amount based on quotes from vendors and price lists from other vendors. Quotes and price lists can be provided upon request.