

**New on the Shelf:
Teens in the Library**

**Findings from the Evaluation of
Public Libraries as Partners in Youth
Development, An Initiative of the
Wallace Foundation**

FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Several trends have come together recently to intensify interest in how public libraries might best support the development of youth in their communities. First, more and more teenagers have been visiting public libraries because they are safe, comfortable, and affordable places to do homework, use computers, and socialize after school. In turn, parents, communities, and policymakers increasingly view public libraries as part of a network of supports for youth that includes schools, churches, parks and recreation centers, museums, and youth-serving organizations.

Libraries, publicly funded and present in most communities, are viewed as a promising resource for low-income youth who have less access than their more affluent peers to the educational and career development services they need to become productive adults. However, most libraries have limited resources and staff to work with youth. Although nearly a fourth of library patrons are teenagers, public libraries traditionally have devoted less of their space, personnel, and financial resources to services for teens than to any other age group.¹

At the same time, public libraries also have been grappling with questions about their mission and relevance in the age of the personal computer and Internet. In response, they have sought to define themselves as multifaceted institutions that not only provide printed and digital resources and expert guidance to these information sources, but also serve as cultural, educational, and social hubs for communities. Such a broad vision opens up new ways for thinking about how public libraries might work best with youth to broadly support a range of needs—intellectual, vocational, personal, and social.

Such an approach fits well with the principles of the youth development movement, which emerged as an important force during the 1980s and 1990s. Increasingly influential with policy makers, legislators, and funders, youth development principles view young people as resources instead of problems, and stress the importance of community supports for youth development, including safe spaces, relationships with supportive adults, and meaningful activities. As the influence of youth development principles has spread, interested parties both within and outside the library field have come to view public libraries as institutions that can offer important developmental supports for youth, particularly in underserved, low-income communities.

Given these trends, The Wallace Foundation launched the Public Libraries as Partners in Youth Development (PLPYD) Initiative in 1999. The goal of the Initiative was to “support the development of innovative models for public library systems to provide high quality educational enrichment and career development programs for underserved low-income teenagers and children.”² Public libraries selected for participation in the Initiative were challenged to develop or expand youth programs that engaged individual teens in a developmentally supportive manner, while enhancing

¹ National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). *Services and Resources for Children and Young Adults in Public Libraries*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (NCES 95-357), 1995.

² Wallace Foundation (formerly, DeWitt Wallace-Readers’ Digest Fund). Request for Implementation Grant Proposals, 1999.

library services for all youth in the community.³ PLPYD libraries were encouraged to ground their work in youth development principles, and to develop partnerships with schools and other community institutions. Recognizing the need of low-income teens for affordable social supports located in their neighborhoods, Initiative funding was directed towards libraries that serve predominantly low-income communities.

This summary is based on the report from Chapin Hall Center for Children’s 4-year evaluation of the Initiative.⁴ The purpose of the evaluation was not to assess individual sites, but rather to derive lessons from the Initiative that are relevant to the library field as a whole. The evaluation focused on identifying which types of youth programs and implementation strategies were more or less effective in engaging youth and furthering the broad goals of the Initiative; the costs of developmentally enriching youth employment programs for public libraries and how might they be financed; the most important benefits of the Initiative for youth, libraries, and communities; and the lessons of the Initiative regarding the capacity of public libraries to provide services, programs, and jobs that meet the developmental needs of youth. Evaluation data included interviews and surveys of youth, library staff, and community informants, program observations, and administrative records at all nine sites. A study of youth participation was conducted at three sites, while programs at four sites were the focus of an in-depth examination of cost and financing issues.

- The PLPYD Libraries**
- Brooklyn Public Library (Brooklyn, NY)
 - Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore, MD)
 - Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC)
 - Fort Bend County Libraries (Richmond, TX)
 - King County Library System (Issaquah, WA)
 - Oakland Public Library (Oakland, CA)
 - Free Library of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA)
 - Tucson-Pima Public Library (Tucson, AZ)
 - Washoe County Library System (Reno, NV)

This report presents key findings and lessons from the evaluation about the effects of the PLPYD programs on youth, libraries, and communities and what it takes to implement and sustain high-quality youth programs in public libraries. Considered as a whole, the PLPYD experience demonstrates that:

- Public libraries have the potential to design youth programs that provide developmentally enriching experiences to teens and have a positive effect both on youth services and on the library more broadly.
- Implementing and sustaining these projects is complicated, time-consuming, and expensive.
- The success or failure of particular programs depends on the library’s resources and the degree to which these programs are an integral part of the institutional mission and goals of the library.

Many library staff expressed the view that their libraries are understaffed and underfinanced, and, moreover, that teens are only one of many constituencies they serve. Thus, regardless of the level of financial and human resources, we learned that youth programming is more successful when the goal of serving young people well is embedded in the library’s mission. This integration is necessary in order to allocate funds; hire, train, and retain staff; and commit the time—that is, the

³ The nine participating libraries, which included both leading urban libraries and smaller county systems, received grants of approximately \$400,000 each for a 3-year implementation period. The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) was engaged to provide support and technical assistance to the sites throughout the Initiative.

⁴ Spielberger, J., Horton, C., & Michels, L. Findings from the Evaluation of Public Libraries as Partners in Youth Development, a Wallace Foundation Initiative. Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, 2004.

intensive staff time in the short term to implement and manage good programs, and the period of time over the long term—for programs to reach maturity and show results.

Library Youth Development Programs: Potential Benefits for Youth, Libraries and Communities

The PLPYD Initiative provided a valuable opportunity for public libraries to test new ways to enhance their resources, programs, and services for youth. Participating libraries used the PLPYD funding to invest in a wide range of paid and volunteer positions for teens such as homework, computer, and general library assistants; members of youth advisory councils; library advocate and outreach staff; and copy and design center employees. They sponsored a variety of youth training experiences to foster personal and social development, job skills, knowledge of technology, and awareness of future career and educational opportunities. They also provided training, drawn largely from the ideas and practices of the youth development field, to library staff to increase their knowledge of adolescent development and skills in working with youth. In addition, the libraries attempted to engage a variety of community organizations, including youth development programs, youth-serving agencies, youth jobs programs, and schools, to assist with youth recruitment and training and program facilitation.

Findings from the evaluation indicate that the PLPYD Initiative had a number of positive impacts on participating youth, library systems, and communities. They suggested that public libraries have the potential to provide an important developmental support to teens, especially those in low-income communities, and that teens can make meaningful contributions within the library. Beyond providing quality collections and information, libraries can be safe and welcoming places and offer adult relationships and role models, and meaningful activities for youth. Library youth development and employment programs also have the potential to build the capacity of the library as an institution and strengthen its ties with the community.

Potential Benefits for Teens

Library-based youth development programs can provide both specific job skills and personal and social development. Interviews and surveys with youth and adult participants, as well as program observations, showed that the PLPYD programs provided contexts for a range of developmental experiences for youth. Although we could not measure changes in teens over time that might be directly attributable to their PLPYD experiences—as opposed to other experiences at home, in school, and in the community—they perceived their experiences to be beneficial.

For many teens, PLPYD activities seemed to be their first experience of working toward goals with adults who took them seriously and appreciated their contributions. Youth participants mentioned such benefits as learning technology and other job-related skills, developing such personal qualities as patience and perseverance, and experiencing feelings of acceptance, belonging, and contributing to a group. Youth also expressed their satisfaction in helping other people and in being recognized by librarians and patrons for their contributions. At the same time, program coordinators and library staff reported a range of outcomes they observed in youth, particularly increased self-confidence, sense of responsibility, self-esteem, and desire to be successful, and improvements in peer and adult relationships.

Reflecting the broad goal of PLPYD to expose low-income youth to new educational and career possibilities, some youth also reported that their work at the library made them more aware of what they did or did not want to do in the future—or simply encouraged them to think about their future. Some youth also recognized that they were learning skills that would transfer to their future desired careers, even when those careers were not the exact job they were doing at the library.

Library-based youth programs can provide opportunities for teens to develop positive relationships with adults and peers. One factor that stood out as critical to maintaining youth participation was positive relationships with adult program leaders and other library staff. The PLPYD youth programs initially attracted teens by offering them interesting and fun activities, a chance to serve others, monetary incentives, and, in some cases, a “real job” where younger teens could work at the age of 14. Once they were recruited, their relationships with program and library staff and their peers, as well as the quality of their activities, kept them involved. By most accounts, program and library staff treated them respectfully, valued their services, and tried to provide opportunities for them to take initiative and responsibility.

Library-based youth programs can increase knowledge and use of the library by teens. The PLPYD programs not only attracted the attention of teens who had been regular users of the library prior to the Initiative, but also succeeded in engaging teens who did not usually come to the library. The PLPYD programs attracted both boys and girls. Although a higher percentage (59%) of the participants across the nine sites was female, some sites found the number of boys who expressed interest in PLPYD activities encouraging. Many youth said they learned more about the library and viewed it differently than they did before the PLPYD Initiative. Youth said they now know more about the resources at the library, have a “behind the scenes” view of the library and have a greater appreciation for a librarian’s job. They also viewed librarians as more friendly and saw the library as a place they can be social and have fun—instead of “quiet and boring.”

Potential Benefits for Libraries

Library-based youth development programs can improve the skills and attitudes of library staff in working with youth. One of the most notable benefits of the PLPYD Initiative was that it fostered more positive attitudes towards youth among library staff. Staff attributed improvements in attitudes towards teens to both staff training and direct experiences working with youth. Staff reported they learned more about adolescent development, got to know teens better as individuals, and learned to be clearer in communicating expectations. These findings were consistent with reports from youth, who noted that although library staff were often unfriendly when they started working at the library, as time passed they became more friendly and were more willing to listen to their ideas.

Changes in staff attitudes and interactions with teens can influence the broader culture of the library. An improved attitude among staff towards teens was the most consistently reported positive impact of the PLPYD experience across the nine sites. This finding is important because it demonstrates that staff attitudes towards teens can be changed through new or expanded youth programming, greater opportunities to develop personal relationships with teens, and staff training in youth development principles. This change represents an important step because more positive staff attitudes towards teens generally have a positive impact on a library’s ability to attract youth patrons and interact with them in developmentally appropriate ways. Moreover, principles such as “doing with, rather than for” youth and asking them for their ideas became recognized as a valuable approach that could be applied in working with other patron groups and other library staff.

Teens employed by library-based youth programs can provide valuable services to library staff. The PLPYD Initiative proved to staff that teens could be entrusted with a wide variety of tasks and could be genuinely helpful to library staff. According to the executive director of one of the libraries, “the focus on high school kids as employees who do things other than shelving books has been sort of a breakthrough concept.” Another executive director reported, “We’ve learned to value the contributions that teens can make. We’ve come to trust them with tasks and job responsibilities that are far beyond what we had traditionally allowed them to perform. Staff are learning that youth can accept those roles, perform them very well, and can be real contributors.” Not surprisingly, youth enjoyed performing a wider range of work. (Shelving books, in fact, was their least favorite task). And, when they were well structured and well supervised, these expanded work roles for teens provided a much broader range of developmentally positive experiences.

Learning the language of youth development helps to connect public libraries to a larger network of youth organizations and policy discussions. Staff credited youth development principles with changing the general culture of the library by providing an important “new language” for library administrators to work with and helping the library establish a new leadership role for itself in the community—one that connected them to a broader public discussion and policy discourse. “The phrase, ‘positive youth development,’ is a great handle to put on what we all are trying to do,” explained one senior administrator. Another noted that being able to speak the language of positive youth development “gives me confidence that I can talk about this in a way that’s credible to politicians. I can speak to the fact that this is a national effort in libraries and other institutions. It’s documented and researched that this is an important and worthwhile thing to do.”

Potential Benefits for Communities

Library youth programs can provide needed services to the community. The PLPYD programs provided a variety of services to the community, including homework help and other activities for neighborhood children and assistance with computer technology to patrons of all ages. Staff of community organizations expressed gratitude for the steps the libraries were taking to provide jobs and better services for youth in their communities. Although most programs were located in library buildings, a county library placed computers, printers, wiring for Internet access, craft materials, and youth employees directly in local community centers in addition to branch libraries. In another county library system, teens produced a Spanish-Dial-A-Story program that attracted an average of 700 calls a month, testifying to the popularity of this service in the Spanish-speaking community.

Some providers, such as community arts and educational organizations and neighborhood development organizations, said their connection with the PLPYD programs allowed them to reach youth they had not been able to serve previously. Staff sometimes described their teen participants as “ambassadors” for the library because they had learned about the many resources that the library offered and communicated that knowledge to their families and friends.

Library youth programs can make the library a more comfortable place for other community members. Of the seven PLPYD sites that started new youth programs as a result of the PLPYD grant, four believed that the Initiative had helped to increase teen patronage of the library in their community, and three believed that the Initiative had increased adult patronage as well. Notably, these three sites employed teens to provide computer assistance and other help to library patrons. Library staff reported that many adult patrons liked the help that their teen employees were providing, as well as the general fact that local youth were working in the library. Relatedly, three

sites believed their teen employees had helped to diversify its staff and improved the library's ability to serve diverse ethnic, racial, and/or national groups in the community.

Libraries, through their youth development programs, can become more visible in the community and provide leadership on youth issues. Although all of the PLPYD libraries were highly regarded in their communities when they began the Initiative, three sites believed it strengthened their leadership role, particularly with regard to youth issues. For example, in one of the urban libraries, staff reported that the Youth Empowerment Summits that were organized as parts of its PLPYD Initiative helped strengthen the library's connection with community organizations, schools, and businesses. As the library's reputation for providing high quality after school experiences and training for youth grew, the city's Recreation Department and other organizations sought help in training their youth workers. This helped to strengthen the library's connections with the community and build relationships with other city agencies concerned with youth.

Making Youth Programming Work

Library-based youth development and employment programs have the potential to produce important benefits for youth, libraries, and communities, but these positive impacts are unlikely to be sustained without an infrastructure of support. A key factor in sustaining the PLPYD programs was leadership, as reflected in an executive director who valued flexibility and innovation and strongly supported youth programming, and a high-level youth services administrator to facilitate the assimilation of the new youth programs into the larger institution.

Thus, if other public libraries are to follow the path forged by the PLPYD Initiative, they need to systematically build their capacity for youth programs and services in a way that is sustainable and compatible with their institutional goals and mission. Based on the experiences of the PLPYD sites, we offer the following lessons in three areas for public libraries to improve their youth services and resources for youth in their communities: the staffing and support of youth programs, youth engagement, and institutional capacity.

Staffing and Support of Youth Programs

Dedicated staff are essential to effective youth programs. Across the PLPYD sites, program staff, senior administrators, and librarians agreed that youth programs require a staff person whose priority is to manage the program on at least a part-time basis. Typically, this person is needed to oversee the program on a day-to-day basis, communicate with senior administrators and branch staff, recruit youth, develop staff and youth trainings, and work with any program partners. Another consistent finding was that the program coordinator needed the active support of at least one senior administrator in order to do his or her job well. If this support was not provided, the coordinator was too isolated from the larger structure of the library, which had a negative effect on the overall program.

If well supported, non-library professionals can make an important contribution to youth programs in public libraries. Outside professionals with experience in education, technology, youth development, and youth employment can bring knowledge, experience, and community resources that library staff do not have, although it will likely take time for them to learn the library system and develop working relationships with branch staff. Most of the PLPYD sites where youth jobs and programs were likely to be sustained beyond the implementation period had key leadership from

non-library professionals. These individuals learned the culture of the library, how to communicate with library staff in their terms, and how to apply youth development principles to library settings.

Beyond a dedicated program leader, successful library-based youth programs require the involvement and commitment of branch staff. Branch staff need to understand the purpose of the program and how it forms a part of the larger mission of the library. They also need to have open channels of communication with the program director, and trust that their views will be respected and considered. Despite the time it requires, it is also important that some branch staff play an ongoing role in important aspects of program operations, such as hiring youth. If this does not occur, staff are likely to disengage from the program, depriving it of the support necessary to sustain it over the long term.

Other library staff who are not formally engaged in a youth program also may be important to it. For example, if security guards are unfriendly or hostile to youth, the library will not be able to develop a welcoming environment for youth regardless of particular programs. Alternatively, youth employment programs will probably require the help of human resource staff to review job descriptions, discuss union issues, manage payrolls, and so on. In general, the larger and more intensive the program, the more it will require at least some involvement from a variety of departments throughout the library.

Ongoing staff training to build knowledge of youth development and ways of working with teens is an important part of successful youth programming. Positive changes in staff attitudes towards teens are not likely to last unless they are reinforced with a youth service infrastructure, which emphasized the importance of ongoing staff training and planned opportunities for staff to work with youth to maintain positive staff attitudes. Training is a critical means of educating staff about the nature of adolescent development, how to work well with teens in library-settings, and the purpose and value of youth programming. To be effective, training must be relevant to staff and respectful of their time constraints. Emphasizing a youth development approach can be very helpful if it encourages staff to relate to teens in new ways and addresses their practical concerns about working with youth. Other effective strategies are providing training for other library staff—branch managers, adult librarians, and security guards—and holding joint trainings for adults and teens.

Working with community organizations can strengthen library-based youth programs but takes time and effort. The organizations most frequently associated with the PLPYD Initiative were youth development programs, youth-serving agencies, youth jobs programs, and public schools. Other organizations included colleges, social service and philanthropic organizations, technology training centers, career and college preparation programs, churches, media outlets, banks and businesses, community arts programs, youth development programs, health organizations, and parks and recreation centers. Most partnerships evolved to accomplish specific PLPYD program goals. Community partners most often assisted with program facilitation, youth recruitment and training, and provided space, materials, and transportation.

The most productive relationships were ones formed with people and agencies that could extend the outreach, resources, and expertise of the library but also understood the goals and needs of the library. This required clear and ongoing communication to clarify goals, roles, and responsibilities.

Fostering Youth Participation

Even in the best of circumstances, it can be difficult for adults to get the attention of adolescents and engage them in structured activities. Many youth who participated in the PLPYD Initiative found their way to their library's youth programs because they were in the library or had friends who were involved. However, outreach to schools and youth-serving organizations were essential to recruiting youth for the programs in the first year.

There were several challenges in engaging youth for the PLPYD youth programs, particularly in recruiting hard-to-reach teens and teens who had not been library users:

- Limits in the number of youth that could participate due to funding, staffing, and program content;
- Restrictive human resource policies within the library about the employment of younger teens, the number of hours teens could work, and the range of roles and responsibilities youth could assume; and
- Difficulties in identifying potential participants in the absence of demographic information about them (the collection of which public libraries traditionally have resisted).

Outreach to and fostering the participation of underserved youth is not easy for public libraries. Locating the PLPYD programs in libraries or community centers in low-income neighborhoods were an effective way of targeting low-income teens. However, special efforts still were needed to engage youth who do not usually come to the library.

Community organizations that work with low-income youth can assist in recruiting youth, but must understand the library context and program goals. In the PLPYD Initiative, there were advantages and disadvantages to using outside organizations to recruit youth for library jobs and programs. Schools, youth-serving organizations, youth employment programs, and occasionally, city or county juvenile justice departments brought in more "hard-to-reach" teens and teens who do not normally come to the library. However, the varied priorities and goals of outside organizations influenced which teens were identified for jobs, and they did not always fit well in the library environment. Thus, the success of referrals from outside organizations depended on clear communication between the library and the outside agency about program expectations and the ability of library staff to work with more difficult teens.

Both program factors and personal factors affect participation in library-based youth development programs. In the PLPYD Initiative, youth were attracted by the service opportunities in the library programs, financial incentives, and the desire to use and develop computer skills. Their decisions to participate were influenced, in part, by other responsibilities and after-school activities and family support. Although most of the PLPYD youth were able to make arrangements to get to their jobs, transportation was a significant barrier for some, particularly in rural areas. It was also one barrier that program and library staff tried to overcome, for example, by planning activities for times when teens could attend, scheduling them close to where teens lived, or providing bus tokens for use of public transportation.

The relationship between teens and their supervisors or program leaders strongly influences their connection to their library job or activity. In interviews, teens often spoke about the positive effect of a relationship with a project coordinator or a library staff member. Clearly, the longer teens were involved in an activity or job, the greater opportunity there was for them to

develop positive relationships with caring adults. These relationships appeared to be critical factors in maintaining youth participation.

Positive relationships between youth and library staff did not happen immediately. It usually took time to for both adults and youth to appreciate the skills and perspectives of the other, especially those not used to working together. It was not uncommon for teens to note that library staff were “unfriendly” when they first started working at the library but became friendlier over time. Similarly, it was not uncommon for staff to complain about some of the teens’ behaviors when we interviewed them in the first year of the Initiative, and later, during the second and third years, to extol their contributions and accomplishments.

Youth participation requires both structure and flexibility on the part of adult leaders. Flexibility on the part of project and library staff emerged as an important factor in retaining youth in PLPYD jobs and programs. Yet, this flexibility came at some cost to library staff. Libraries implementing homework help and computer assistance programs needed teens when they were busiest, that is, during the after-school and evening hours. Because of transportation difficulties and other activities, teens were not always available at the times they were most needed. On the other hand, less structured and less intensive programs such as youth advisory groups tended to be less engaging activities for teens.

Providing a range of positions for youth of different ages and abilities and engaging older youth as mentors to younger youth are promising strategies in youth programs. In the PLPYD Initiative, a “scaffolding” or “apprenticeship” model that provided steps for teens to move up to more responsible, higher-level positions—and perhaps serve as mentors to younger and newer program participants—was one way to maintain interest among youth. High school students also responded well to programs that used college students as program assistants or “mentors.” College students served as role models of someone who was in higher education and had career aspirations. In addition, teens enjoyed working with them, and often saw them as having backgrounds that were similar to their own.

Intensity of participation affects the benefits perceived by youth. The quality of the experiences and benefits reported by youth tended to be stronger for those who were engaged for longer periods of time. Teens who had taken part in consistent activities (e.g., regularly scheduled jobs as homework helpers or computer assistants) for several months or longer were more likely to report benefits than those who have been involved for shorter periods or in less frequent activities. In addition, teens who had been regular volunteers or users of the library before becoming involved in PLPYD were more apt to report positive effects than other teens for whom their PLPYD job or activity was their first substantial experience with the library.

Institutional Capacity

Youth employment programs are very costly for public libraries to run. However, there is considerable variation among intensive youth programs that employ teens as providers of homework help and computer assistance. By far the largest cost component is personnel, including teen salaries, and program and library staff. Employing youth in homework help programs typically will be more expensive than having them serve as library assistants because homework help programs generally require an additional layer of staffing in the form of adult program leaders to work with teen staff. In

addition, these programs usually require more of a time commitment on the part of the program director, given the wider range of program elements involved.

Raising funds to sustain these programs over time is challenging. Although public libraries get the bulk of their funding from local government, special programs are typically funded through private donations. Sustaining programs over the long haul, however, requires public funding or a commitment within the library's budget.

Although they are expensive, there are advantages to programs that engage youth intensively. Intensive programs are defined as those that involve regular youth participation over a substantial period of time: for example, employing teens as part-time computer help, homework help, and general library assistants at several sites, as well as in one library's copy and design center. (Notably, all of the programs that produced intensive engagement involved paid teen positions. When volunteer positions were used, the tenure of youth involvement decreased substantially.)

The PLPYD experience suggests several advantages to intensive programs. First, because youth remain substantially involved over a longer period of time, they are more likely to reap the educational, vocational, and personal benefits found to be associated with library youth programs. Second, intensive programs allow library staff to get to know youth well as individuals, which seems to be one of the most effective ways to improve staff attitudes towards youth.

Continuity in teen-staff relations also allows youth employment programs in particular to become an important support to library staff, as youth have the time to learn to do their jobs well with a minimum of adult supervision. At the same time, when teens are employed in positions that involve substantial interaction with library patrons, longer job tenure allows them to develop beneficial relationships with those that they serve. (Children, for example, may form valuable relationships with teen mentors in homework help programs.) Taken as a whole, these factors tend to have a positive impact on the entire library system, as youth become well integrated into the institution and, in most cases, part of its public persona.

Public libraries need to assess and build their capacity for youth programs and services systematically. It is helpful to think of youth programs and services on a continuum that extends from establishing a good young adult collection to developing and sustaining intensive youth programs. Although the particular mix of programs and services that fit a given system will vary, all libraries must be careful to think about how to build their capacity in a systematic and sustainable way. A number of sites in the PLPYD Initiative attempted to implement ambitious youth programs that they were not prepared to sustain once the implementation grant ended. And, because insufficient attention was devoted to building a lasting infrastructure for youth services, several of these programs left a minimal institutional legacy once they were discontinued.

Only public libraries that have built a solid infrastructure for youth programs and services should attempt to move to a higher level of programs and services: for example, establishing dedicated teen space, providing volunteer opportunities for teens, or hiring a youth services coordinator to develop youth programs. And, in so doing, they should be careful to design programs that will build further capacity in a sustainable way.

Youth programs work best when they are part of a strong sense of institutional mission. Having a strong sense of mission that permeates the institution—which typically requires a strong executive director—helps to create harmonious relations among different levels of staff, and boosts

the energy and morale of employees throughout the system. This, in turn, supports the implementation of youth programs that require the support of both senior administrators and librarians and demand a substantial investment of time and energy.

It is critical, however, that the connection between youth programs and services and the larger mission of the institution be understood and accepted by both senior administrators and all members of the library staff. If the general purpose of a youth program is understood and accepted as an important part of the overall mission of the library—and this mission has been previously internalized and embraced by library staff—then staff are much more likely to support the program regardless of daily mishaps and its inevitable ups and downs. If the mission of the library is not commonly understood to include substantial investments in youth programs and services, this should be addressed before trying to make such investments.

The more expensive a youth program, the more it needs to show benefits that extend beyond those directly involved. Today, both public agencies and private funders routinely demand that institutions that receive funding to provide public or social services demonstrate that they are spending money in a cost-effective way. With regard to youth programs, this frequently involves requests to provide outcome measures or some equivalent documentation of program effectiveness. Although it can be difficult to provide clear data on youth outcomes due to the complexity and cost of the necessary research, it is important to have some clearly defined set of objectives that youth programs can reasonably be expected to accomplish.

For example, employing teens as homework help assistants is relatively easy to justify, as some staff will be needed to assist children with homework in such programs in any event. Given a high-quality program, having teens perform this role can be reasonably expected to produce positive outcomes for the youth involved, the children in the program, the other staff involved in it, and the community more broadly.

Well-designed, high-quality youth programs can help build library capacity in a variety of ways. Staff training, for example, is an important component of any quality youth program. Learning how to conduct regular staff trainings represents an important capacity building measure for the library, both with regard to youth services and more broadly.

Teen employment programs may also build capacity by providing staff with a source of flexible, multipurpose support. As several libraries that participated in the PLPYD Initiative found, simply realizing that teens could be productively engaged in a variety of tasks beyond shelving books represented an important breakthrough. In cases where youth employees interacted with the general public, several PLPYD libraries found that they played a valuable role in helping the library to better serve diverse cultural and linguistic communities. At the same time, these programs are believed to hold promise in terms of meeting future recruitment needs, particularly with regard to diversity.

Conclusion: Public Libraries and Youth Development

Given the increasing tasks facing youth and the complex skills they must develop for future careers, *all* community institutions and policy makers—not just public libraries—need to reexamine their roles in supporting youth. Local communities provide an important context in which children, youth, and families grow, develop, and function. People who are less affluent or less well-integrated into the larger society (such as children and youth) are particularly reliant on the local community to provide needed goods and services and for connections to opportunity and information. Public

libraries, along with schools, youth-serving agencies, religious organizations, and other community-based organizations, represent a source of space, access, staff, materials, knowledge, and connections that can improve the well-being of children and youth and support their development.

The PLYD Initiative demonstrates that public libraries can provide an important developmental support to teens, especially those in low-income communities. Public libraries provide free access to information, technology, and safe places to be during out-of-school hours. In addition, libraries have the potential to offer high-quality youth development and employment programs that include training in specific job skills and general personal and social skills. Because of their universal presence in communities and their function as providers of information, libraries may play a special role in the web of support communities provide for youth.

Working with youth requires time, financial resources, dedicated staff, consistent leadership, and the integration of youth programming with the library's core mission and goals. Public libraries need to start by assessing their capacity for youth programs and services and then build their capacity in a systematic way. This suggests that the role of the public library in meeting the developmental needs of youth—and which needs—depends largely on its capacity and resources as well as the strength of other community resources like schools, parks, and other youth-serving organizations.

Not all libraries have the resources to provide large-scale programs without additional public or private funding. However, this does not mean that libraries cannot improve their youth services or interactions with youth. With supportive leadership, staff can develop knowledge and skills to work more intensively with youth and develop relationships with community organizations that might lead to the sharing of resources. As the PLYD Initiative demonstrated, improved youth services and relationships with teens can benefit libraries as well as youth and communities.

One key recommendation for policy makers and funders is to invest in public libraries that serve low-income communities and have some institutional capacity to expand services for youth. There is a shortage of library staff who know about adolescent development and are experienced in working with youth, and the current professional educational system does not provide an incentive to work with youth or improve services for them. Staffing and staff development are critical elements of building capacity, which requires efforts to encourage library schools to devote more time to training professionals for public service in general and youth services in particular. It also requires libraries to provide more opportunities for their current staff to enhance their skills in working with youth.

In addition, non-library professionals represent an important source of potential staffing for youth programs. In the PLYD Initiative, outside professionals with experience in education, youth development, and youth employment brought knowledge, experience, and community resources that library staff did not have. If non-library professionals are hired to run important youth programs, it is critical that they have the time and support necessary to learn the fundamentals of the library system.

Another recommendation is for public libraries to explore ways to better work with schools and other youth-serving organizations in their communities. Developing effective relations with other community organizations can help to strengthen the organizational infrastructure of a community. Although libraries have no mandated connection with children and youth as schools do, they have the potential to provide a neutral and accessible site for program delivery, are a valuable community resource for information and exchange, and can be a key partner in developing supportive communities for youth.

In the PLPYD Initiative, schools remained challenging to communicate with (especially when teacher turnover was high), but many local branch libraries discovered ways to connect on an individual staff level. Community arts organizations, youth media programs, and community health and counseling centers emerged as promising resources for libraries implementing new youth initiatives. Community development organizations and youth employment organizations were other natural partners for library teen employment programs. However, successful collaborations depended on mutual understanding of the needs, resources, and capacity of both the library and the community organization. As in all relationships, establishing clear goals and responsibilities and communicating regularly were critical to success.

SECTION I. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, several trends have converged to intensify interest in how public libraries might best support youth development in their communities. First, more and more teenagers have been visiting public libraries, particularly in the after-school hours. Especially in low-income communities, many youth are drawn to the library because they want and need access to computer equipment that they do not have at home. Public libraries are also attractive to youth who need a safe, comfortable, and affordable place to do homework and socialize after school. This increased teen traffic produces a dilemma for many public libraries: although they welcome increased patronage, large numbers of teens place a strain on a system that can be underfinanced and understaffed. This strain is heightened when teens and librarians harbor negative stereotypes of one another, which makes it more difficult for library staff to work with teens than with other patrons.

At the same time, public libraries have been grappling with the larger question of their mission and relevance in the age of the personal computer and Internet. Policymakers, funders, and others have challenged libraries to explain why they remain vital public institutions when more and more information can be stored, searched, and retrieved electronically. The primary response to this has been to re-imagine the public library as a multifaceted community institution, one that contains printed and digital resources, offers expert guidance to information sources, and serves as a cultural, educational, and social hub for the community. Such a broad mandate opens up new ways for thinking about how public libraries might work best with youth, as well as with other patron groups. Rather than simply treating each patron as an individual book reader and information seeker, this approach emphasizes the holistic support of the intellectual, vocational, personal, and social needs of all patrons in the community.

Such an approach fits well with the principles of the youth development movement, which emerged as an important force during the 1980s and 1990s. Increasingly influential with policymakers, legislators, and funders, the principles of youth development embody a “whole child” perspective that talks about assets and “positive” development rather than deficits and problems, and stresses the importance of community resources that offer safe spaces, relationships with supportive adults, and meaningful activities. As the influence of youth development principles has spread, interested parties both inside and outside the library field have come to view public libraries as institutions that offer important developmental supports for youth, particularly in underserved, low-income communities.

Given these trends, the Wallace Foundation launched the Public Libraries as Partners in Youth Development (PLPYD) Initiative in 1999. The stated goal of the Initiative was to “support the development of innovative models for public library systems to provide high quality educational enrichment and career development programs for underserved low-income teenagers

and children.”⁵ Public libraries selected for participation in the Initiative were challenged to develop or expand youth programs that engaged individual teens in a developmentally supportive manner, while leveraging enhanced library services for all youth in the community. PLPYD libraries were encouraged to ground their work in youth development principles, and to develop partnerships with schools and other community institutions. Recognizing the particular need of low-income teens for affordable social supports located in their neighborhoods, Initiative funding was directed toward libraries that serve predominantly low-income communities.

The experience of the PLPYD Initiative offers important lessons to the library field as a whole. As public libraries attempt to establish themselves as multifaceted community institutions, they must confront a new set of questions about their relationship with youth. To what extent, for example, should libraries aspire to do more than provide teens with access to quality collections and professional assistance? To what extent should they attempt to develop programs and jobs for youth that are structured to provide important developmental supports? Is it realistic for libraries to support individual youth in a more intensive and personal way? And, do public libraries that serve low-income communities have a particularly important role with regard to youth development?

This report examines the experience of nine public library systems involved in the PLPYD Initiative as a means of answering broad questions about the actual and potential role of public libraries in the lives of youth. It is the last of three reports prepared by Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago for the Wallace Foundation to explore different facets of the Initiative. “Public Libraries and Youth Development: A Guide to Practice and Policy” (Whalen & Costello, 2002) explored the evolving connections among public libraries, young adults, and the growing national youth development movement and their policy implications. “The Public Libraries as Partners in Youth Development Initiative: An Interim report of the Evaluation of a Wallace-Reader’s Digest Funds Initiative” (Spielberger & Whalen, 2002) covered early findings from the first half of the Initiative’s implementation period and examined emerging issues of program implementation, youth participation, and community partnerships. This final report describes the nine library systems that received grants from the Initiative, the activities that they undertook, their experiences during implementation, and the impact of Initiative activities on youth, libraries, and communities.

The PLPYD Initiative was based on the Wallace Foundation’s long-standing interest in strengthening the role of cultural and educational institutions in low-income communities and improving youth access to developmentally appropriate enrichment activities. It was based on the following assumptions: Low-income teens have less access than their more affluent peers to the educational and career development services they need to develop into productive adults. There are still significant disparities in participation in the supports and opportunities provided by “positive youth development activities” especially among low-income youth. Because public libraries are prevalent in most communities, they are a promising resource for low-income children and teens.

The Initiative began in early 1999 when ten libraries received modest planning grants to develop plans to strengthen educational enrichment and career development opportunities for

⁵ DeWitt Wallace-Readers’ Digest Fund, “Request for Implementation Grant Proposals,” 1999.

low-income youth. During the 9-month planning phase, library staff conducted needs assessments of their communities that included surveys, interviews, and focus groups with youth as well as adult community members. In some cases, youth were actively involved in data collection. In developing their proposals for the PLYD Initiative, library staff were asked to develop new youth programs or strengthen existing ones based on principles of best practice to be piloted and refined during the implementation phase. They also were asked to include in their proposals plans to initiate new partnerships with youth-serving organizations, strengthen their capacity to use positive youth development principles, identify training needs, and use data for program planning and evaluation. The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) was engaged to provide technical assistance to the nine sites throughout the Initiative.⁶

The nine libraries that participated in the Initiative included both leading urban libraries and smaller county systems.⁷ Serving low-income communities in rural, suburban, and urban areas, they represent a range of administrative structures from traditional city agencies to expansive county libraries organized as independent taxing districts. Although the strategies developed by each site were unique to their library systems and communities, they shared some common elements. In response to the historical lack of attention to teens in public libraries, all developed programs and services for middle school and/or high school youth. (Some also included elementary school-age children.) All of the sites particularly sought to engage youth from low-income and minority neighborhoods and to locate programs and resources in underserved communities. Most of the libraries created part-time employment opportunities, training, and leadership experiences for teens. They also used practice principles from the youth development movement to guide program design and implementation and enhance the training of library staff. Based on the assumption that libraries should not do their work with youth alone, staff of the nine initiatives also developed relationships with community organizations in their efforts to implement programs to support youth in their communities.

This report is based on a 4-year evaluation of the Initiative by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. The purpose of this evaluation was not to assess individual sites, but to derive lessons from the Initiative that are relevant to the library field as a whole. Evaluation data were gathered from a variety of sources, including annual surveys of youth, library staff, and community informants; annual site visits involving program observations and interviews with youth, library staff, and representatives of partner organizations; and the quarterly collection of information on youth participants, program activities, staff and youth trainings, community partnerships, and program expenditures. Three sites were selected for an intensive study of youth participation, and four were used for in-depth examination of cost and financing issues. Four questions were central to the evaluation:

⁶ The Urban Libraries Council (ULC), found in 1971, is an association of public libraries in metropolitan areas and the corporations that serve them. ULC provided ongoing technical assistance to the nine sites, which included holding annual meetings of project staff and library directors and annual meetings of youth representatives of the nine sites, and conducting site visits to each of the libraries two or three times a year. ULC also fostered ongoing networking among the sites, including several cross-project site visits for project staff to visit other PLYD sites.

⁷ The participating libraries were as follows: the Brooklyn Public Library (Brooklyn, NY), the Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore, MD), the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC), the Fort Bend County Libraries (Richmond, TX), the King County Library System (Issaquah, WA), the Oakland Public Library (Oakland, CA), the Free Library of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA), the Tucson-Pima Public Library (Tucson, AZ), and the Washoe County Library System (Reno, NV).

- Were particular youth programs and implementation strategies more or less effective in furthering the broad goals of the Initiative? Who participated in these youth programs, and why?
- What are the costs of developmentally-enriching youth employment programs for public libraries? How might such programs be financed?
- What were the most important benefits of the Initiative for participating youth, library staff, and the overall library system? What represented the most difficult challenges?
- What lessons does the Initiative offer the broader field regarding the capacity of public libraries to provide services, programs, and jobs that meet the developmental needs of youth?

In the remainder of this chapter, we provide additional background information on public libraries, youth development, and the structure and evaluation of the Initiative in order to establish a broader context for this discussion.

Public Libraries and Youth Services

As growing numbers of children and youth regularly visit their neighborhood libraries after school, parents, communities, and policymakers increasingly view public libraries as part of a network of supports for youth that includes schools, churches, parks and recreation centers, museums, and youth-serving organizations. Publicly funded and present in most communities, libraries are an especially promising resource for low-income children and youth who have less access to opportunities for enriching developmental experiences.

Although nearly a fourth of library patrons are teenagers, public libraries traditionally have devoted less of their space, personnel, and financial resources to services for teens than to any other age group (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 1995). Allocations for young adult staff and services continue to be more vulnerable to cuts in funding than any other service area. Fewer than 15 percent of public libraries currently have a young adult librarian (Jones & Shoemaker, 2001). A 1999 survey, “Programs for School-Age Youth in Public Libraries,” conducted by the American Library Association (ALA) on behalf of the Wallace Foundation, found that nearly all public libraries provide reading programs and cultural activities for preschool and school-age children. However, fewer than half offer community services/leadership programs and computer classes or workshops; and fewer than one-fourth provide homework assistance and career development programs for 13- to 18-year-old youth (American Library Association & Office for Research Statistics, 1999).

The lack of services for youth is only one of many challenges currently facing public libraries in the United States. Many library professionals are troubled by a sense of uncertainty regarding the library’s mission and social relevance in the age of the personal computer and Internet. This feeling that the public library is suffering an “identity crisis” is exacerbated by the shortage of resources that many systems—particularly those that serve low-income communities—experience. Problems such as low salaries, staff shortages, and restricted budgets may sap a library staff’s sense of purpose and morale. Further, it can be difficult to develop new

initiatives designed to improve this situation when staff feel overwhelmed with existing, day-to-day obligations.

In part because of the popular growth of computer-based technologies, the demands placed on the public library are greater than ever. Libraries are now routinely required to purchase, upgrade, and maintain computers; train staff on their usage; and manage the many patrons who come in to use them. At the same time, the patron base that libraries are attempting to serve has changed substantially in recent decades. In keeping with the growing racial and ethnic diversity of the United States, public libraries serve constituencies that speak many languages, have differing needs and expectations, and have varying degrees of familiarity with traditional library culture.

In addition, public libraries are often inundated with children and youth during the non-school hours—particularly in low-income communities, where other after-school activities are not available. Managing large numbers of children and youth can severely strain the already scarce resources of a public library system. Further, many in the library field have long regarded working with adolescents as a particular challenge. Teens and librarians commonly harbor negative stereotypes of each other, with teens viewing librarians as “boring” and “uptight,” and librarians viewing teens as noisy and disruptive. However, their presence also offers public libraries an opportunity to connect more strongly with their communities by establishing themselves as a primary supporter of local children and youth.

Meeting the Developmental Needs of Youth

When considering the potential role of public libraries in the lives of youth, it is important that we understand both the developmental tasks of adolescence and the specific situation of low-income American youth. Although the teenage years can be understood as a distinct phase of human development, what this precisely entails will vary across different societies and historical epochs. At the same time, the specific constellation of opportunities, challenges, and supports that adolescents face in the current American context will vary among social, economic, and cultural groups. In other words, although all youth must tackle some common developmental challenges, there are also important differences in terms of what they must try to accomplish and how difficult it is for them to do so.

In the contemporary United States, adolescence represents a long passage from childhood to adulthood that is occurring under conditions that are unfamiliar and complex. Primary developmental tasks include establishing an identity, mastering the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue good employment opportunities, learning to trust and cooperate with others, and developing a sense of morality and ethics (Conger & Galambos, 1996; Eccles & Appleton Gootman, 2002). Realizing these objectives involves cultivating many specific capacities and skills, including abstract thinking and planning, literacy and numeracy skills, emotional regulation, a sense of their own interests and talents, and an ability to interact successfully with a variety of people.

Although navigating this period of life is not easy for anyone, it is much more difficult for teens growing up in low-income communities. First, the strong correlation between poverty and negative youth outcomes is well known. Family income is the single most important factor

influencing adolescents' development, as it impacts where they live and go to school, their access to health care, and opportunities for advanced education or training. Although the effects of poverty can be mitigated by good parenting, adolescents growing up in poor families are at increased risk for a range of health and behavioral problems, including school failure, substance abuse, unintended pregnancies, and illegal activities (Kipke, 1999; Musick, 1999; Panel on High-Risk Youth, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, & National Research Council, 1995).

The experience of growing up poor, in a devalued group, and in a neglected neighborhood affects adolescents' ability to address the developmental tasks of that age period. It increases the potential costs of adolescent experimentation and risk-taking. It also affects the formative experiences that adolescents have to draw on to meet the complex demands of these years. By the time they have reached high school, many of these adolescents' lives have been marked by the kinds of relationships, day-to-day pressures, and crises that pull children off track—preoccupied or erratic parenting, inordinate responsibility for care of self and siblings, loss of family members through separation or death, family or community violence, pressure from gangs, and contact with police, juvenile justice, and child welfare authorities.

These factors, along with inadequate schooling, leave a surprising number of low-income youth without solid literacy and numeracy skills; knowledge of literature, the sciences, and social sciences; or such academic habits as persistence in abstract tasks. Their environments can further limit adolescents' exposure to the many domains of adulthood, including the world of work, family, and civic participation. Many low-income youth have either nominal or vague vocational aspirations (Halpern, Barker, & Mollard, 2000) or know little about what specific jobs entail (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). At the same time, they face heightened psychological and situational barriers to taking advantage of opportunities that are offered them. Some are held back by lowered self-expectations, and others are held back by family, friends, or their own fears of standing out or “journeying beyond the familiar” (Musick, 1999).

The Youth Development Movement

During the past decade, the recognition that youth are expected to master challenging developmental tasks in a rapidly changing and often demanding environment fueled the growth of a “youth development movement” that has generated considerable interest in both public-policy and philanthropic circles. Youth development concepts have been integrated into federal programs for youth in the Departments of Education, Labor, Justice, and Health and Human Services. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, for example, broadened the supports provided to low-income youth to include general academic skills, access to career planning information, leadership development, and counseling. Youth development principles have also made their mark on the world of young adult library services, as evidenced by references to “asset building” and “positive youth development” in recent books (e.g., Jones, 1998; Jones, 2002; Walter & Meyers, 2003) and journals of the American Library Association and trade publications such as *VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)* and *Youth Adult Library Services*.

The youth development movement has shifted the approach to meeting the needs of youth away from an emphasis on problems and deficits and toward an emphasis on assets and

skills. The youth development approach assumes that young people are capable and active participants in their own development, have abilities and talents to contribute to others, and desire meaningful connections with adults and peers. From a youth development perspective, high-quality programs are ones that aim to support and advance the well-being and success of all youth, not just prevent problems. Youth development programs should be physically and emotionally safe, have high standards and clear expectations for behavior, foster supportive relationships with adults and peers, and respect and encourage individual initiative.

Furthermore, youth programs also should provide challenging opportunities for teens to develop useful skills and knowledge, express themselves, try out new roles, and contribute to their communities (Academy for Educational Development, 2000; Benson & Pittman, 2001). Larson suggests that high-quality youth programs may be particularly effective contexts for promoting the following areas of adolescent development: (1) *developing initiative*, including the ability to work toward goals, overcome obstacles, maintain motivation, and manage time; (2) *bridging difference*, or developing connections with and an understanding of diverse individuals and cultures; and (3) *forging community connections*, including relationships with adults who have the skills and resources to connect youth to the larger social world (Larson, 2000; Larson & et al, 2003; Larson, Hansen, & Walker, in press).

The PLPYD Initiative

Reflecting its long-standing interest in strengthening the role of cultural and educational institutions in low-income communities and improving youth access to developmentally appropriate enrichment activities, the Wallace Foundation launched the PLPYD Initiative in early 1999. The Initiative was based on the following assumptions: Low-income teens have less access than their more affluent peers have to the educational and career development services they need to develop into productive adults. There are still significant disparities in participation in the supports and opportunities provided by “positive youth development activities,” especially among low-income youth. Because public libraries exist in most communities, they are a promising resource for low-income children and teens.

In January 1999, ten libraries received modest grants from the Wallace Foundation to develop 3-year plans to strengthen educational enrichment and career development opportunities for low-income youth. During a 9-month planning phase, library staff and community stakeholders conducted needs assessments of their low-income communities that involved surveys, interviews, and focus groups with youth as well as a variety of adult community members. In some cases, youth actively participated in data collection. In developing their proposals for the PLPYD Initiative, library staff were directed to develop new youth programs or strengthen existing ones, using principles of best practice, to be piloted and refined during the implementation phase. They also were asked to include in their proposals plans to initiate new partnerships with youth-serving organizations, strengthen their capacity to use positive youth development principles, identify training needs, and use data for program planning and evaluation.

In October 1999, nine of the ten libraries received grants of approximately \$400,000 each for a 3-year implementation period. These nine libraries included both leading urban libraries

and smaller county systems and served low-income communities in rural, suburban, and urban areas (see Figure 1 at the end of this chapter). They were selected, in part, because they each expressed a strong desire to improve services for youth in their communities. They also reflected some distinct institutional strengths. These strengths ranged from having a strong financial base for implementing new initiatives, a deep commitment to outreach and links with community organizations, a strong history of services to youth, to leadership committed to develop services, such as homework help programs, to meet the needs of low-income communities.

The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) was engaged to provide technical assistance and other support to the nine sites throughout the planning and implementation of the Initiative. Among a variety of activities, ULC established a National Advisory Council and a Youth Partnership Council to enrich the work of the overall initiative. ULC organized annual meetings of project staff and library directors and annual meetings of youth representatives of the nine sites, and it conducted site visits to each of the nine libraries two or three times a year. ULC also fostered ongoing networking among the sites, including several cross-project site visits in which project staff visited other PLPYD sites. Technical assistance was offered in a number of areas, including enhancing the visibility of the libraries and work with youth both locally and nationally, leadership strategies, youth development and career opportunities, strategies for working with youth, strategies for engaging and working with community organizations, and tools for information management.

Although the proposals developed by planners at each site were unique to their library systems and communities, they shared some common elements. In response to the historical lack of attention to teens in public libraries, all decided to develop programs and services for middle school and/or high school youth. (Some also included elementary school children.) All of the sites particularly sought to locate programs and resources in underserved communities and to engage youth from low-income and minority neighborhoods. All provided leadership experiences and training to develop teens' personal and social skills as well as job skills. As we will discuss in the next chapter, seven of the nine libraries made youth employment a central feature of their PLPYD Initiative, based largely on findings from focus groups conducted with low-income teens during the planning phase of the Initiative. When asked how public libraries might better serve teens in their communities, many youth stressed the need for jobs. Practice principles from the youth development movement were used to guide program design and implementation and enhance the training of library staff. Based on the assumption that libraries should not do their work with youth alone, staff of the nine initiatives also developed relationships with community organizations in their efforts to implement programs to support youth in their communities.

The PLPYD Evaluation

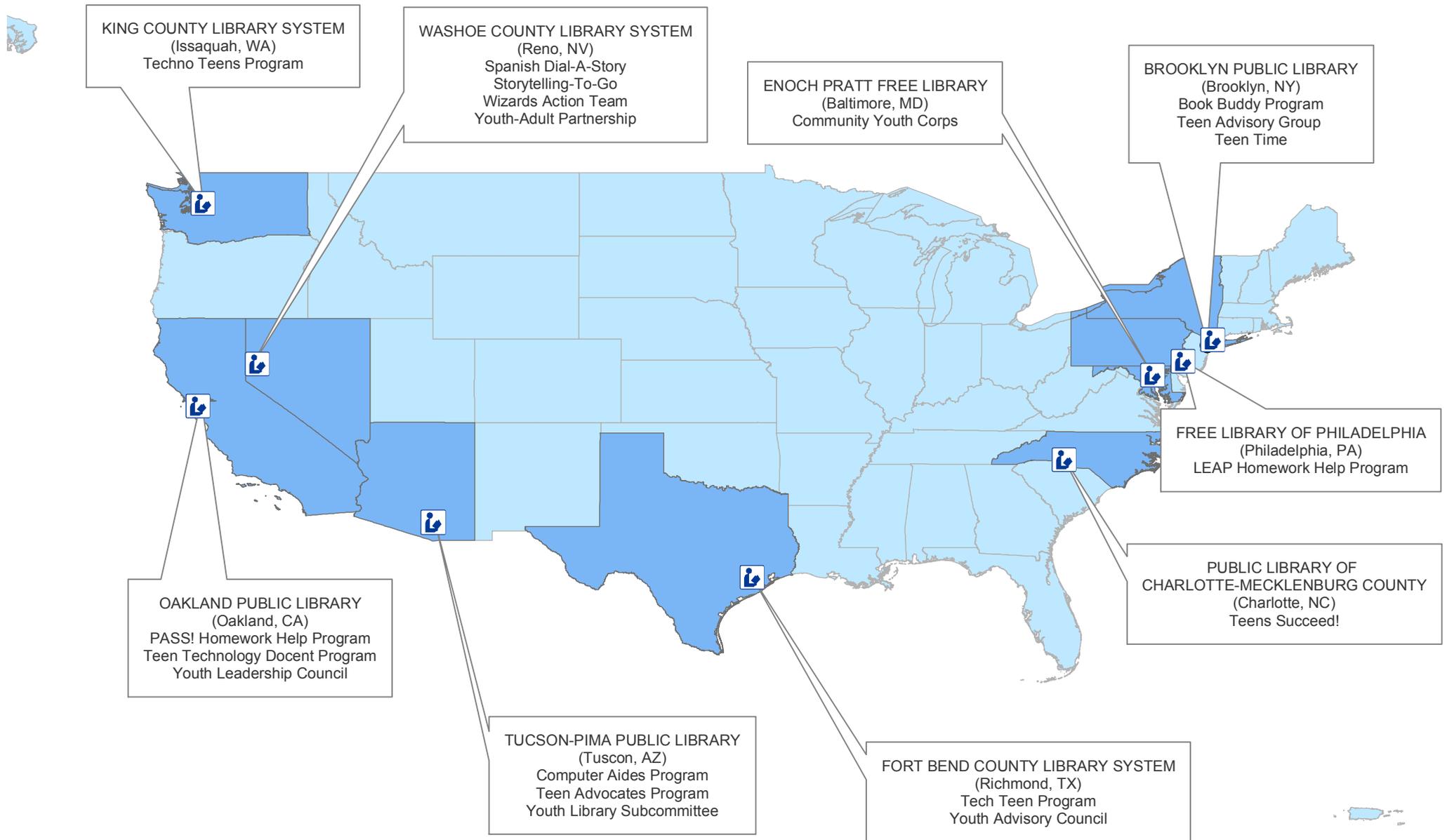
The Wallace Foundation commissioned the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago to conduct a 4-year evaluation of the PLPYD Initiative, beginning in the fall of 1999. The purpose of this evaluation was not to assess individual sites, but to derive lessons from the Initiative that are relevant to the library field as a whole. Evaluation data were gathered from a variety of sources, including (1) annual site visits involving program observations and interviews with youth, library staff, and representatives of partner organizations; (2) annual surveys of

youth, library staff, and community informants; and (3) the quarterly collection of information on youth participants, program activities, staff and youth trainings, community partnerships, and program expenditures. In addition, three sites were selected for an intensive study of youth participation, and four were used for in-depth examination of cost and financing issues. As noted above, a policy map (Whalen & Costello, 2002) also was developed during the first half of the Initiative to lay out the policy implications of the potential connections between libraries and the national youth development movement. (Additional information about the research methodology can be found in Appendix B.)

Organization of this Report

Chapter 2 provides a detailed overview of the nine PLPYD projects, as well as the community and institutional contexts that shaped their implementation. In Section II, Chapters 3 through 5 focus on the implementation of the Initiative. Chapter 3 examines general patterns of youth participation in these programs, and Chapter 4 discusses staffing, institutional support, and community partnerships. Chapter 5 analyzes the cost and financing of programs that employ teens as homework help or general library assistants, both of which were central to the Initiative. Chapters 6 and 7 in Section III consider the impact of the Initiative for participating youth (Chapter 6) and participating libraries and their communities (Chapter 7). In Section IV, the concluding chapter discusses the lessons learned from the PLPYD Initiative and reflects on the role of public libraries in supporting youth, particularly in low-income communities.

Figure 1. The PLPYD Initiative



Chapter 2

THE PLPYD INITIATIVE: OVERVIEW

Implemented in nine library systems, the PLPYD Initiative had the following broad strategies:

- To provide part-time jobs and employment and volunteer opportunities for teens in library and community settings during the out-of-school hours.
- To offer educational experiences to teens, including training in job skills, personal and social skill development, and assistance in preparing for college and future careers.
- To involve youth in advisory roles to improve spaces, collections, and other library resources and make them more inviting to teens.
- To educate librarians and other library staff on the needs of adolescents and positive ways of working with them.
- To develop relationships with schools and other community organizations to assist in program development and implementation, including youth recruitment.

Although the content of the PLPYD programs and activities varied across the nine sites, the goals were similar: to explore new approaches to youth programs that would improve access to educational and career opportunities by building personal, social, and technical skills; and to strengthen both the capacity of library staff to work with teens and the capacity of the library system to continue to support these new youth services. And, although the PLPYD libraries varied widely in their geographies and community characteristics, they faced similar challenges in their low-income communities—notably, inadequate educational institutions and a need for more enriching out-of-school opportunities for youth. They also struggled with challenges within the library, including a lack of time, resources, and training for staff to work with teens.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the community and library context for the Initiative as described in our interviews. The Initiative was conceived and implemented against a policy backdrop characterized in part by a heightened focus on the needs and problems of adolescents, particularly those in low-income areas. Other important contextual factors include diminishing funding and the growing demands that technology and a more diverse population bring to bear on library systems. As libraries grapple with these external tensions, they also confront internal tensions as they struggle with shrinking staff size and a smaller applicant pool, increased demands arising from greater need for and use of technology, and incorporating growing numbers of teens into their programs.

In the next section of this chapter, we describe some of these external and internal pressures. We then describe the key elements of the PLPYD Initiative—youth program models, youth participants, staffing, and community partnerships. Table 1 presents an overview of the Initiative elements and context at each of the nine sites.

Table 1. Overview of the PLPYD Initiative Sites

SITE	Community/Library Context*	Youth Programs and Roles	Youth Participants**	Program Staff	Community Organizations
Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore, MD)	Large (2) urban library with 26 branches (3 of which closed in 2001) City population: 651,154 Med. household income: \$34,500 Percent below poverty line: 23.7% Ethnicity: Black/African American: 64%; White: 32%; Hispanic: 2%; Asian: 2%; other: 1%	In the Community Youth Corps (CYC) service learning program, teens performed a variety of tasks, including homework help and technology assistance, and received training in leadership, computer skills, and the arts. CYC began at three branches and the Central Library and expanded to additional branches.	CYC interns included 73 youth, 51% male and 49% female. Approximately 60% were in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade, 30% were in ninth or tenth grade, and 10% were in eleventh or twelfth grade.	The PLPYD Project Coordinator was a youth professional from outside the library, and the library's Director of School and Student Services served as Project Director. College work-study students as well as a manager or young adult librarian at each branch also worked with youth.	Area colleges supplied college work-study students for mentors. Schools were sites for recruitment by project staff. Arts and media organizations provided youth activities. An outside youth development consultant helped facilitate leadership training.
Brooklyn Public Library (Brooklyn, NY)	Very large (1) urban library with 59 branches City population: 2,465,326 Med. household income: \$26,108 Percent below poverty line: 26.5% Ethnicity: White: 41%; Black/African American: 36%; Hispanic: 20%; Asian: 8%; other: 11%	Varied projects located at five branches included a Teen Advisory Group, a Technology Loft with 36 computers, two video documentary projects, a youth community-mapping program, the Book Buddy after-school program, a newsletter, an educational computer program for children, and Teen Time for teens to socialize, play music, and do homework and other activities.	88 youth, 35% male and 65% female, were recorded as PLPYD participants. Approximately one-third of the youth were in middle school; approximately one-third were in ninth or tenth grade, and approximately one-third were in eleventh or twelfth grade.	The PLPYD program was coordinated by a former young adult librarian and the Manager of Young Adult Services. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising the youth.	Community programs, including a mental health organization, a youth program, and Outward Bound, assisted in program development, youth training (e.g., technology, media, and community mapping), and program facilitation.
Public Library of Charlotte/Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC)	Large (2) city-county library system with 22 branches County population: 695,454 Med. household income: \$45,350 Percent below poverty line: 9.7% Ethnicity: White: 64%; Black/African American: 28%; Hispanic: 7%; Asian: 3%; other: 3%	Teens Succeed! was implemented at two branches. One was a teen employment model in which teens operated a business, the Copy and Design Center, and assisted staff with library tasks. The other was a volunteer model that involved teens in developing services for the community, including a Hip-Hop Poetry program and a newsletter, and assisting library staff with branch-based tasks.	53 youth, 58% male and 42% female, took part in one of the two Teens Succeed! projects. Approximately half of the youth were in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade and approximately half of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade.	Two program sites were coordinated by two youth development professionals with teaching experience. Other staff included the Youth Services Director, branch managers, and branch librarians.	Weed & Seed, a federal community development program, assisted in youth recruitment and life skills programming. YMCA provided transportation and recreation. Communities in Schools provided career planning and college preparation workshops.
Fort Bend County Library (Richmond, TX)	Mid-sized (3) county library system with 8 branches County population: 354,452 Med. household income: \$55,164 Percent below poverty line: 8.0% Ethnicity: White: 57%; Hispanic: 21%; Black/African American: 20%; Asian: 11%; other: 9%	Located at four library branches and seven community sites, the Tech Teen program engaged youth in assisting younger children, their peers, and adults with computers. Tech Teens and other youth also participated in youth advisory councils at each site. In the third year, some Tech Teens performed library duties at branches.	60 youth, 42% male and 58% female, were trained and/or assigned to Tech Teen positions at library and community program sites. The majority of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade.	Project coordinated and directed by library staff, including the Coordinator of Youth Services and a library assistant in adult services. Community partners and branch staff provided additional support in supervising the youth.	Community centers, churches, schools, and youth organizations, including YMCA, Butterfly, 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the county Parks and Recreation Department provided space, facilities, and help with youth recruitment and supervision.
King County Library System (Issaquah, WA)	Very large (1) county library system with 41 branches Population: 1,737,034 Med. household income: \$51,300 Percent below poverty line: 8.0% Ethnicity: White: 76%; Asian: 11%; Hispanic: 6%; Black/African American: 5%; other: 4%	The Techno Teens program, in which youth were employed to assist patrons in the use of library resources, including computers and the Internet, and staff with a variety of typical library tasks, was located at sixteen project sites. Youth also assisted staff in promoting library services, developing displays, and conducting children's programs.	55 youth, 51% male and 49% female, were trained and hired in the Techno Teens program. Approximately two-thirds of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade.	Project coordinated by a professional in the field of youth employment and development and directed by the library's Associate Director for Public Services. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising the youth.	Junior Achievement and Workforce Development Council provided curricular resources. Microsoft gave Web site training. Others provided staff training and assisted program staff with evaluation and assessment.

SITE	Community/Library Context*	Youth Programs and Roles	Youth Participants**	Program Staff	Community Organizations
Oakland Public Library (Oakland, CA)	Mid-sized (3) urban library with 16 branches Population: 394,473 Med. household income: \$40,055 Percent below poverty line: 19.4% Ethnicity: Black/African American: 36%; White: 31%; Hispanic: 22%; Asian: 16%; other: 12%	Expansion of the PASS! after-school and homework help program, conducted at ten library branches and four park sites. New activities included a Youth Leadership Council, a Teen Technology Docents program, and teen homework centers.	184 youth, 33% male and 67% female, were involved in PLPYD activities. Half of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade and approximately half of the youth were in eleventh or twelfth grade.	PASS! was staffed by a program coordinator and part-time site coordinators, who worked with teen mentors at each of the PASS! locations. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising the teens.	The Youth Employment Partnership led youth recruitment and training for PASS! The city Parks and Recreation Department provided program facilities. The county food bank supplied program snacks. The community computing center provided youth training.
Free Library of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA)	Very large (1) urban library with 53 branches Population: 1,517,550 Med. household income: \$28,897 Percent below poverty line: 21.7% Ethnicity: White: 45%; Black/African American: 43%; Hispanic: 9%; Asian: 5%; other: 5%	Hired youth as Teen Library Assistants (TLAs) in an expansion of the LEAP Homework Help program; four sites selected for participation in PLPYD, but training funded by PLPYD was provided to youth in all LEAP branches. Created new positions for college students who were former TLAs. Youth also planned and conducted annual youth summits.	33 youth, 41% male and 59% female, were employed at four LEAP locations as TLAs and ALs. Two-thirds of the youth were in high school, and one-third were college students.	PLPYD project manager with expertise in education and technology was hired from outside the library. Other project staff included the Director of the Office of Public Support Services, the Program Development Coordinator, branch managers, and LEAP adult program leaders.	Collaborated with city Office of Children's Policy and Safe and Sound to develop program standards. Community college provided staff training on youth development. Various community organizations provided Youth Empowerment Summit workshops.
Tucson Pima Public Library (Tucson, AZ)	Large (2) city-county library system with 18 branches Population: 843,746 Med. household income: \$32,544 Percent below poverty line: 16.2% Ethnicity: White: 75%; Hispanic: 29%; Black/African American: 3%; Asian: 2%; other: 17%	Created new teen area in main library and started three new youth programs: a volunteer Library Subcommittee, a Computer Aide program that hired teens for computer assistance and other services in four branches, and the Teen Advocate program that trained teens to give public presentations about the library.	82 youth, 26% male and 74% female, took part in one of the three primary PLPYD activities. About half were in eleventh or twelfth grade, 27% in ninth or tenth grade, 14% in sixth, seven, or eighth grade, and 13% of the youth were high school graduates or had earned their G.E.D. and/or were in college.	A senior young adult librarian became the full-time PLPYD Project Director, assisted on a part-time basis by another young adult librarian. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising the youth.	Metropolitan Education Commission, local schools and colleges, School-to-Work, and youth development/employment programs assisted with youth recruitment and resource materials.
Washoe County Library System (Reno, NV)	Mid-size (3) county library system with 12 branches Population: 339,486 Med. household income: \$42,070 Percent below poverty line: 9.8% Ethnicity: White: 80%; Hispanic: 17%; Asian: 5%; Black/African American: 2%; other: 2%	Four youth-employment programs or Action Teams. Spanish Dial-A-Story translated and recorded stories in Spanish; Wizards provided computer assistance and other library duties; Storytelling-To-Go performed stories at community events and library branches; and a Youth Adult Partnership (YAP) engaged staff and youth in improving and promoting space and resources for teens and other library patrons.	109 youth, 45% male and 55% female, were trained and/or participated in one of the action teams. Approximately half of the youth were in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade, 37% of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade, and 16% of the youth were in eleventh or twelfth grade.	A PLPYD Project Director was hired from outside of the library along with several consultants from the community, including a high school computer science teacher, a youth development professional, a professional storyteller, a director of a family support organization, and recording studio professionals. Branch staff provided minor support in supervising youth.	A professional storyteller, a charter high school, a sound design studio, county family resource centers, the school district, the Sun Valley Teen Center, and a community access television station assisted with youth recruitment and training, and program facilitation.

*Library data source: 2000 PLA Statistical Report. In this report, library systems are classified according to population of legal service area, which is the number of people in the geographical area for which the library provides services (and from which it derives income). The PLPYD libraries fell into one of the three largest service areas: (1)=population of 1,000,000 and over; (2)=population of 500,000 to 999,999; and (3)=population of 250,000 to 490,000. Data on income and ethnicity come from the 2000 Census (www.census.org). Percentages on ethnicity add up to more than 100% because the Hispanic category overlaps with other ethnic categories in the 2000 Census. The national poverty rate for 2000 was 11.3 percent of families (10.8% for metropolitan areas and 13.4% for non-metropolitan areas); the rate is higher (16.2%) for families with children under 18.

**Participation numbers represent the number of youth reported as participants in PLPYD jobs and programs by sites during a 27-month period from April 1, 2000, through June 30, 2002.

The Context for PLPYD

The External Context

The nine libraries were all well positioned to reach low-income and minority youth. Poverty rates for the cities and counties that the libraries served were on a par with or higher than national averages, especially in the large urban library systems. Moreover, within these cities and counties, the PLPYD programs were purposely located in areas with higher proportions of residents from low-income and minority backgrounds, having low levels of educational achievement, and living in areas with considerable health and safety risks. Staff at all of the PLPYD sites reported serving a patron base that was either highly diverse, with many different racial and ethnic groups, or largely non-White, with a predominance of a single minority group. In addition, the cities and counties served by the PLPYD libraries mirrored the national increase (from 14% in 1990 to 18% in 2000) in the number of residents who speak a language other than English in their home. Five states implementing the PLPYD Initiative experienced a higher growth in non-English-speaking residences than the national average: California, Texas, New York, Arizona, and Nevada.⁸

Several library staff serving diverse communities reported that many recent immigrants come to the library as a place to learn English and acculturate to a new society. “We have a constant flow of people coming in looking for ESL and citizenship materials,” commented one branch librarian. She added: “We also get a lot of children and teens coming in to help their parents find books and learn how to speak English.” This phenomenon, observed a senior library administrator, reaffirmed the importance of public libraries in an “almost traditional” role of education and democracy building. She said: “It’s kind of like the turn of the century with all of the new immigrants trying to get their foothold and move forward.”

When adults and youth were asked to list the most critical challenges and issues facing youth—particularly low-income and minority youth—in their communities, three main issues surfaced. Most prominent were concerns related to education, especially the poor quality of schools and the lack of interest in education by youth, expressed in part by high drop-out rates. The other primary concerns were safety, particularly the prevalence of violence and gang activity, and health, particularly the availability and use of drugs and alcohol by teens and high rates of teen pregnancy. One youth respondent told us: “I think teenagers aren’t getting the proper education that they need, and are turning their time (from lack of interest) to negative things.” Another youth worried that “in some schools some children cannot get a fair enough education because of prejudice in schools.” A staff member of a community agency stated:

The school system is failing low-income kids. The problem will be exacerbated by standardized testing, which is likely to actually increase the numbers of youth who don’t graduate. This area has a tremendous gap between haves and have nots, which is reflected in opportunities available through schools and the increasing segregation of neighborhoods.

⁸ Source: www.census.gov (U.S. Census Bureau United States Department of Commerce). The population served by the King County Library System, for example, includes African Americans, Cambodians, Eastern Europeans, Hispanics, Hmong, Indians, Koreans, Middle Easterners, Native Americans, Russians, Somalians, and Vietnamese. Staff at one branch reported that they carry materials written in Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Another issue, mentioned more by adults than youth, was the lack of positive activities or the inability of teens to access them, sometimes because of transportation difficulties. In the words of a community organization staff member: “There is a lack of meaningful, enriching, safe and creative opportunities during non-school hours that are free, easily accessible, and engaging for teens.” A librarian in a county library system observed that although there are opportunities such as the Scouts and 4-H for young people, they generally are not accessible or used by youth in low-income or high-risk areas. Moreover, adults are not always available to young people or expect them to assume unreasonable responsibilities for household chores and child care. According to a community informant:

A lot of parents make these kids responsible too fast. You have parents that got to work, and they are not there because they are busy running around, and they make these 8-, 9-, and 10-year-old girls baby sit these little siblings. When I check on them, they can’t come to the program because they having to baby sit their 1-, 2-year-old baby sister. ... We have to try to do something within the environment, because if you don’t change the community, you just send them right back into the environment.

Table 2. Most Frequently Mentioned Problems Facing Teens, 2000*

Problem	Respondent			
	% Library Staff	% Community Members	% Youth	% Total
Poor schools, low literacy, high school drop-out rate, limited access to technology and career preparation	39	27	29	33
Limited access to resources and opportunities, lack of vision for the future	34	50	14	29
Community violence, gangs	12	15	28	18
Lack of parental involvement and adult guidance; prejudice, stereotypes toward teens	17	26	12	16
Drug and alcohol abuse	8	11	24	14
High rates of teen pregnancy	10	8	12	10
Peer pressure	3	6	10	6

*Based on a survey of 259 respondents: 104 library staff, 93 youth, and 62 staff of community organizations ($n = 62$). Percentages add up to more than 100 because most respondents mentioned more than one problem.

On the positive side, adults also noted their communities were making progress in addressing the problems youth faced. They noted a general increase in efforts to improve educational and recreational opportunities for youth, although barriers to communication and collaboration among community organizations still exist. A youth librarian at a branch in a large urban system noted that teenagers all seem to be “very connected in the neighborhood.” Although he perceived a lack of ambition in teens, he speculated that this “comes from their security within the neighborhood, which is also a very good thing. They have close friendships and a strong sense of community.” Another librarian noted that she was concerned about the number of single parents who “drop their children off in the morning and come back for them in the afternoon.” At the same time, she added: “The community is pretty strong. It’s an older community, and there are a lot of older citizens that frequent the library and are very vocal. There were two sites that this library could have been built, and they were really instrumental in it being here so the kids could walk. So they’re very involved.”

The Internal Context

As noted in the first chapter, the public libraries funded to implement the PLPYD Initiative exhibited various strengths, which included a strong commitment to improving services to teens in their low-income communities. At the same time, these nine libraries faced many of the same challenges as other public libraries—insufficient resources, technology, staff shortages, and growing racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of patrons. Given the sizable concentration of low-income residents the PLPYD libraries served, it was not surprising that all but one reported that budget constraints—and, as a result, staff shortages—were one of their most important challenges. Others included low salaries, hiring freezes, curtailed operating hours, inadequate technology upkeep, difficulty recruiting new employees, physical deterioration, an over-reliance on grants, and inadequate funding for collections and programs. In interviews, library staff emphasized the difficulty of finding staff interested in working with teens. Even when positions were open for young adult librarians, it was hard to find staff willing to fill them at the salaries offered.⁹

Like most contemporary public libraries, PLPYD library staff also reported that they are busier than ever serving the diverse needs of their communities. They routinely provide a wide variety of outreach services to people and organizations in their communities that go well beyond their collections of literature, videos, and music; traditional school visits; and summer reading programs. Libraries jointly sponsor cultural events with other institutions, such as museums, and take materials and services to other settings, including day care and senior centers. They provide meeting areas for a wide variety of activities, including book clubs, sewing circles, nature study, and the Boy and Girl Scouts. Library staff serve on the boards of neighborhood, civic, and business organizations and participate in citywide initiatives for youth and families.

The introduction of computer technology and Internet access represented the largest challenge for staff of the PLPYD libraries. Those located in large urban centers reported that they particularly struggled with managing the high demand from children and youth for computers. A study of library use conducted for the Free Library of Philadelphia found that technology is dramatically changing how libraries are being used and eroding “traditional library behaviors.” Although children and youth are checking out fewer books, they are spending more time at the library. This development has caused the busier libraries to be preoccupied with crowd control. At times, the sheer number of kids clustered around the computers feels overwhelming to many staff and adult patrons alike.

Consequently, many branch librarians reported problems with teens being excessively loud and disruptive. One librarian identified the biggest challenge of her branch as “teenagers hanging out.” Libraries serving a variety of ethnic groups found diversity sometimes compounded staff problems with youth. One branch librarian reported that conflicts and fights

⁹ Many young adult specialists feel marginalized within the library profession. According to advocates in the field, the common lack of enthusiasm for teens themselves frequently carries over to young adult librarians, who are accorded less power and respect than their peers (Chelton, 2000; Jones, 1998). Most schools of library science currently emphasize computers and information technology, rather than public service and work with children or young adults, and there is not a strong career track for young adult librarians.

between youth of different racial groups had been a problem at the library. Another felt that many youth (and adult) patrons from ethnic minorities “do not know how to operate in a library.” Although such complaints could at times be legitimately dismissed as anti-teen traditionalism, they also reflected a real issue for many libraries. These public libraries were often struggling to provide good services to teens who they felt lacked sufficient support and guidance from other adults and institutions. At the same time, they recognized that their roles were necessarily limited. As several staff commented: “We are not social workers.”

Thus, the PLPYD Initiative was implemented in low-income communities with limited educational and employment opportunities for teens and in library systems that had a strong desire to do more for low-income youth, but which, in many cases, were also facing a shortage of human and material resources to work with teens. Given the context for the PLPYD Initiative, the effort to develop better services and new roles for young adults appeared to be as difficult as it was important.

PLPYD Program Models

In implementing the PLPYD Initiative, seven of the nine libraries made youth employment a central or primary feature (see Table 1). Although the reasons for this approach varied among sites, many chose to emphasize employment based on findings from focus groups conducted with low-income teens during the planning phase of the Initiative. When asked how public libraries might better serve teens in their communities, many youth stressed the need for jobs. Teens, they believed, wanted and needed to make money during their non-school time, but good employment opportunities for youth were rare in their communities. Further, library staff believed that if libraries employed more youth, these teens could help the library reach out more effectively to the community.

Box 1 on the next two pages presents the six primary types of programs implemented during the PLPYD Initiative. The two most common teen job experiences were assisting library patrons with computer technology and providing homework help and recreational activities to school-age children on a weekly basis. Computer assistance programs were the focus of the initiatives in King County and Fort Bend County, but they also featured prominently in the Washoe County and Tucson youth programs. After-school homework help in libraries and community settings was the most significant aspect of two PLPYD initiatives, the PASS! program in Oakland and the LEAP program in Philadelphia, as well as being a component of the CYC service learning program in Baltimore. In all of these programs, youth training before and during employment to build job-related technical skills as well as to develop teens personally and academically were integrated into work schedules on an ongoing basis.

As Box 1 suggests, a wide variety of activities occurred in the nine sites. The sites differed in the content and quality of various jobs, programs, and activities, as well as in the kinds of job training experiences provided to teens. It is also important to note that there were differences in how long PLPYD programs were designed to last and how frequently youth were expected to participate. As we will discuss in the next chapter, these program requirements were one of the factors influencing youth participation.

Box 1. Roles for Youth in PLPYD Youth Development Programs

Homework Help Program Assistant

Two of the PLPYD sites expanded existing after-school homework help programs, the *LEAP* program in Philadelphia and the *PASS!* program in Oakland. (Other PLPYD libraries offer homework help programs but they were not part of the PLPYD Initiative.) Teens were employed 10 hours a week, on average, during the school year to help younger children with homework, computer use, and other after-school activities such as games, book reading, cultural enrichment, and arts and crafts. They also assisted in planning activities and participated in training on a regular basis. Programs were held 4 or 5 days a week for about 3 hours each day. *LEAP* was run as a drop-in program, but *PASS!* registered children for the program and kept track of individual participation. The programs were located in the main children's area of the library or in a separate room, depending on the branch. During the Initiative, *PASS!* also piloted four programs at city Parks & Recreation Centers.

Both programs were coordinated by an adult program leader (and, if a large program, an assistant) under the overall supervision of the branch manager or another member of the branch staff. The actual roles of youth varied considerably from branch to branch, depending on their experience and interests, and also on the preferences of the adult leaders. Some teen employees spent the bulk of their time assisting children with computers although adults took more responsibility for actual homework help. More experienced youth generally took more responsibility for developing their own activities. Youth also took part in staff meetings to talk about how things were going and issues with children, and to plan future activities.

Computer/Library Assistant

Five sites implemented new technology-based employment programs for youth—the *Tech Teen* program in Fort Bend County, the *Techno Teen* program in King County, the *Technology Docent* program in Oakland, the *Computer Aide* program in Tucson, and the *Wizards* program in Washoe County. Typically, these were year-round programs that employed teens an average of 10 hours per week, although the number of hours per week varied considerably from site to site, ranging from a low of 3 to a high of 15.

As their program names imply, the roles for youth originally were conceived to be primarily technology-based. Youth spent a portion of their time signing patrons up for public-use computers and assisting patrons in using the computers, word processing, Internet, and printing. They also assisted staff by performing simple computer maintenance, creating or printing documents and mailing lists, and checking in books with the Dynex online cataloguing system. At one site, teens developed written instructional materials for staff on basic computer skills; at another, a teen led occasional classes in computer usage. In addition, teens assisted in a variety of conventional library tasks such as shelving books; removing noncirculating books from shelves; creating signs, displays, and bulletin boards; printing and copying materials for staff; and helping to conduct programs for children, including summer reading programs.

Youth Advisory Council (YAC) Member

Five of the nine sites created youth advisory councils as part of their PLPYD Initiative—the *Teen Advisory Group (TAG)* in Brooklyn, the *Youth Advisory Councils* in Fort Bend County, the *Youth Leadership Council (YLC)* in Oakland, the *Library Subcommittee* in Tucson, and the Youth Advisory Council (YAC), which evolved into the *Youth Adult Partnership (YAP)*, in Washoe County. These groups drew teens from across the library system into one group that usually met at the central library. (The Free Library of Philadelphia also has a Youth Advisory Council, but it was not considered part of the PLPYD Initiative.) One site, Fort Bend County, also created local advisory groups at each of the branch and community centers where its *Techno Teen* program was located. All of the youth who were involved in the youth advisory councils were given community service hours for their work, except for the Washoe County youth, who were paid for the meetings they attended. Typically, youth across the five sites met once or twice a month for a 2-hour period with an adult leader in the library to discuss plans and make decisions. During heavier times of heavier activities—e.g., planning a teen summit—meetings were held at least once a week.

The purpose of the youth advisory councils was to involve teens in advising library staff and making decisions to improve library resources for youth and to increase awareness of the library's resources for youth. YAC youth created programs and held events to attract teens to the library, such as a poetry contest, salsa dance lessons, a library treasure hunt, author visits, and teen summer reading programs. In Tucson, teens in the *Library*

Subcommittee actively participated in the design of a new teen area at the main library and helped to select the carpeting, furniture, and decor of the room. They also advised the library on the magazine selection for young adults and chose books and designed posters for the teen summer reading program. YAC youth across the five sites also performed community service at the library and in other places in the community. Members of the youth advisory councils at many of the sites helped plan and worked at the teen conferences, summits, and expos at the library.

Children's Program and Library Volunteer

Two PLPYD sites sponsored programs to engage youth as volunteers assisting library staff with a variety of branch-based activities, including reading aloud to children, playing games with children, helping children with homework, and assisting patrons with computer technology—tasks similar to ones found in the homework help and computer/library assistant programs. The Brooklyn *Book Buddy* program, which predated the PLPYD Initiative, was available 5 days a week after school throughout the library system. Baltimore's *Community Youth Corps*, a service learning program developed in collaboration with the public schools, was newly created for the PLPYD Initiative. Middle-school and high-school students completed 75 hours of training, leadership experiences, and service with children in selected library branches 2 or 3 days a week.

Business Employee and Library Assistant

Charlotte's *Teens Succeed!* program developed a youth development and employment program as part of a new Copy and Design Center in a mid-size branch library in a low-income community with very few commercial resources. Teens handled all operational tasks in the Copy and Design Center, including photocopying documents for library patrons, businesses, and community organizations, faxing, basic design work, and bookkeeping for the center itself. Teens also worked in the library as "associates," handling the following job responsibilities: shelving books, videos, CDs, etc., according to the Dewey Decimal System; logging book inventories into the computer system; helping patrons; and performing other tasks associated with library services.

Library Advocate and Outreach Staff

Several youth programs provided outreach services—video documentaries, recorded stories, storytelling performances, a program on hip-hop poetry, newsletters on teen issues, and presentations about library services—to the community. One program in this category was Tucson's *Teen Advocate* program in which teens presented information about library resources to groups of children and youth in schools, youth centers, and other community organizations. Teens were paid a stipend of \$100 after completing five presentations. Another program was a branch-based volunteer program developed as part of *Teens Succeed!* in Charlotte. Middle-school youth participated in a range of activities 5 days a week after school, including training to develop computer skills and learn about library resources; and planning, researching, and implementing public programs and other materials, including a teen newsletter, for the community.

After a 6-week training, youth members of the *Storytelling-To-Go* Action Team in Washoe County were paid to perform stories for library programs and other community outreach events, including a workshop for teachers about how teachers can incorporate storytelling into teaching math, science, and geography. The team met twice a month, after their initial training, to develop their skills and increase their repertoire. Experienced participants also took part in the interview process for new members and served as mentors to new participants. The *Spanish Dial-A-Story* Action Team, another program in Washoe County, paid youth to translate fifty-two children's stories into Spanish and prepare audiotapes of them, which are available to Washoe County's Spanish-speaking community by dialing a phone number. Youth participants learned guidelines for story selection, copyright laws, and ways to edit the stories. They received training on performing the stories and worked with a professional recording studio to produce them.

For example, Charlotte’s Teen Succeed! program, the homework help programs in Oakland and Philadelphia, and the computer and library assistant programs at several sites (Tucson, King County, Fort Bend County, and Washoe County) aimed to engage neighborhood youth for up to 10 hours a week in employment and life-skills training and attempted to maintain consistent youth participation for a year or longer. In contrast, other programs either engaged youth intensively for a short period of time or sought to keep them involved for a long period during which the frequency of activities varied widely. For example, Tucson’s Teen Advocacy Program provided youth with training and a small stipend to complete five public-speaking engagements on behalf of the library to community youth. Baltimore’s youth internship program, the Community Youth Corps, provided volunteer placements in branch libraries 1 or 2 days a week for a period of several months. The art and video documentary projects in Brooklyn and Baltimore were other examples of activities that required frequent participation for relatively short periods of time.

Participation in voluntary youth advisory committees—an aspect of five initiatives (Brooklyn, Fort Bend, Oakland, Tucson, and Washoe County)—varied widely. Although most of these groups could involve youth for a year or longer, at times they only called for a few hours of commitment each month. At other times, activities were more intense, for example, when teens helped to plan citywide youth summits or information fairs. Teens were given considerable responsibility to plan and, sometimes, lead events, and planning often required frequent meetings over a period of several months. In the first year, the Library Subcommittee in Tucson met several times a month for several months to help plan and design a new youth room in the main library and discuss options with an interior designer for carpeting, chairs, and other furnishings. Once the design was finalized, however, meetings of the group were held only once a month.

In addition to the core PLPYD programs, PLPYD youth participated in a variety of other events and activities that involved teens in the community. For example, youth helped plan and implement events such as Teen Read Week in Baltimore, a teen talent show in Baltimore and Oakland, a Hip-Hop Poetry program in Charlotte, a Teen Expo in Brooklyn, a Teen Summit in Fort Bend, Youth Empowerment Summits in Philadelphia, and a Murder Mystery and Library Lock-In in Tucson. Many of the PLPYD youth volunteered at library and community events throughout the grant period. For example, King County youth acted as ushers and helped performers and branch staff at the library’s system-wide story fest, “Jump Stories of Horrors for Teens.” Washoe County youth did activities with young children at the library’s “Reading Round-Up.”

Many PLPYD youth also volunteered their time in the community. Baltimore youth did activities with elementary and middle school students at a community center. Washoe County youth volunteered at a used book sale on behalf of the Friends of the Washoe County Library. Charlotte youth participated as youth delegates at a neighborhood symposium, where

“The teens started with a month-long leadership training. They did writing assignments, shared their writing ... and developed their own definition of leadership Then we developed a list of projects. They came up with three topics, which were goals for youth, self-expression, and sexual awareness. We fitted the activities they liked into those concepts. I always integrate the arts into work I do with young people so there were art projects throughout—creative writing, making things We are in the library so reading and writing and sharing reading and writing were part of it. They were required to interview people ... [and] write an essay on a historical leader. They were required to write an essay on themselves as leaders ... and an essay on a person from their community who they saw providing leadership. They wrote essays on group dynamics. It was intense. I think they were great! I was very proud of them.”

~Adult program leader

they discussed positive changes and the needs of youth in Charlotte’s growing community. King County youth participated on a panel discussion on the relevance of libraries in the lives of teens at a colloquium. Oakland youth participated at a conference, “Thinking in the Zone,” where they evaluated and voted on architectural renderings for the new “Teen Zone” at the main library. PLPYD youth also spoke at or participated in several national conferences and meetings, such as the Youth Partnership Council, the Public Library Association Conference, and the American Library Association Conference.

Youth Training

About half of the youth training experiences focused on increasing teens’ computer skills, both to develop them personally and to prepare them for roles assisting library patrons and staff with technology. These sessions were often rigorous, involving experiences with hardware as well as software. In the Fort Bend and King County projects, for example, teens learned how to put a computer together. Significant time was also spent in building communication and customer service skills and knowledge of library resources and procedures. Other technical skills related to specific jobs, such as helping children with homework and public speaking, were offered but not as often. Because over a third of the PLPYD youth were engaged in activities with younger children, it is somewhat surprising that more time was not devoted to strategies for working with them.

Table 3. Themes in PLPYD Youth Training

Theme	% of Training*	# of Sites
Computer technology	49	9
Personal and social development	19	7
Career and job preparation	17	9
Leadership development	14	7
Public speaking/ presentation/storytelling	14	5
Customer service skills	10	7
Work with children (reading, homework help, and crafts)	8	5
Library resources	7	6
Academic skills and college preparation	7	7
Job orientation, policy and procedures	6	7

*Based on reports of 966 youth training events held between July 1, 2000, and June 30, 2002. Percentages add up to more than 100 because many trainings had more than one theme.

Time also was devoted to developing academic, literacy, and study skills in activities that ranged from SAT preparation workshops to poetry writing and book discussion clubs. Although specific activities were designed to engage youth in discussions about the qualities of leadership and leaders they admire, for the most part, program staff believed that a better way to develop leadership skills was through hands-on activities such as participating in library advisory groups, public speaking, and planning for teen summits and other community events.

Youth Participants

Across the nine sites, according to administrative data collected between April 1, 2000, and June 30, 2002, a total of 737 youth participated in the PLPYD programs.¹⁰ These teens ranged in age from 11 to 21 years, from sixth grade to college; the majority (75%) were high school students. Two libraries, Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Washoe County, engaged a higher proportion of middle-school youth than did other sites. A higher proportion (33%) of youth beyond high school age was reported in Philadelphia, where new roles were created for TLA “graduates” of the LEAP program. Compared with other sites, the Tucson initiative also engaged a higher proportion (13%) of older youth who had completed high school or had GED certificates, primarily in its Computer Aide program.

About 59 percent of all PLPYD youth participants were female, although the gender distribution varied widely from one site to another (and sometimes from one activity to another within a site). Some sites found the number of boys who expressed interest in PLPYD activities encouraging. According to one branch manager:

The program has captured the attention of a group of children who would not normally come to the library for any purpose, including boys. Normally, anything with the library is more girl-oriented. This program offers a chance for participants to become involved with the community and to prepare themselves for leadership. So many students shy away from taking active roles because [things are] different in the school system.

A higher percentage, about two-thirds, of the participants in Brooklyn, Oakland, and Tucson were female. On the other hand, a higher percentage of boys (58%) than girls participated in Charlotte’s Teens Succeed! project, whereas the distribution of girls and boys in Baltimore and King County was fairly even.

Table 4. PLPYD Participants by Site (April 1, 2000-June 30, 2002)

Site	No. of Participants*	Gender			Grade**		
		% Male	% Female	% 6-8	% 9-12	% HS Grad/GED/College	
Baltimore	73	51	49	58	41	1	
Brooklyn	88	35	65	33	65	2	
Charlotte	53	58	42	45	55	-	
Fort Bend	60	42	58	17	83	-	
King County	55	51	49	13	87	-	
Oakland	184	33	67	2	97	1	
Philadelphia	33	41	59	-	67	33	
Tucson	82	26	64	14	73	13	
Washoe County	109	45	55	46	53	1	
TOTAL	737	41	59	25	71	4	

¹⁰ The number of youth who had contact with the PLPYD Initiative was often greater, however. For example, in Philadelphia, 33 teens employed in the LEAP program participated in four designated branches; however, training funded through the Initiative was offered to all youth LEAP employees working at other branches. Baltimore staff provided reports on 73 teen interns in the Community Youth Corps; however, other youth participated in additional branch-based activities for teens, including art and video documentary projects, which were funded through PLPYD. Additionally, homework help programs in Philadelphia and Oakland also served large numbers of school-age children.

*A total of 1,324 youth were recruited for PLYD activities, of which 737 (56%) were recorded as program participants. (At a number of sites, other youth participated in additional PLYD activities, including educational enrichment, art and video documentary projects, and youth advisory groups.) Data on gender, school grade, program activities, and length of participation were collected on these 737 youth over a 27-month period. Additional information on ethnicity was obtained for 404 youth who participated in surveys or interviews, indicating participants represented a high proportion of youth from ethnic minorities: 45% were African American, 17% were White, 14% were Hispanic/Latino, 10% were Asian, and 12% were other backgrounds.

**Grade refers to grade at the time teens first joined a PLYD project.

Table 5 shows that the number of youth who participated in different kinds of programs varied. Almost half of the participants were employed about 10 hours per week during the school year in either homework help programs or technology/library assistant programs. Another 14 percent participated in similar activities in a voluntary service-learning program. All of the homework help programs were held at library branches, except for four PASS programs that took place at public parks and recreation centers. Most of the technology assistance programs were based in library branches, except for the Tech Teen program in Fort Bend County, which also placed teen employees in church-based and other community centers.

Table 5. Participation in Primary PLYD Youth Roles

Youth Role	Sites	Number/% of Participants*	Average Participation (Months)**
Homework help program employee (paid)	Oakland, Philadelphia	177 (24%)	11
Technology/library assistance program employee (paid)	Fort Bend, King County, Oakland, Tucson, Washoe County	169 (23%)	15
Library advocacy and outreach staff (paid and unpaid)	Brooklyn, Charlotte (BFR), Tucson, Washoe County	130 (18%)	10
Homework help/technology/ library volunteer (unpaid)	Baltimore, Brooklyn, Charlotte	102 (14%)	8
Youth Advisory Council member (paid and unpaid)	Brooklyn, Fort Bend County, Oakland, Tucson, Washoe County	100(14%***)	11
Business employee/library assistant (paid)	Charlotte (W Blvd.)	40 (5%)	16

*Most, but not all, PLYD youth roles are represented in the table. There is some duplication in the figures because 64 youth participated in more than one program or job.

**Based on participation records for a 27-month period between April 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002. Participation by individual youth ranged from a low of 1-3 months to a high of 24-27 months for all youth roles listed in the table.

***Does not include Fort Bend youth who participated in an advisory council in conjunction with the Tech Teen program.

Program Staff

Dedicated staff is an important element of effective youth programs, and all of the PLYD sites had one or more individuals whose jobs were devoted to administering the Initiative. Most commonly, a full-time project coordinator was responsible for implementing all aspects of the program. The coordinator's responsibilities included recruiting, training, and working with youth; planning, scheduling, and coordinating program activities; developing training materials; engaging staff of partner community organizations; communicating with branch staff; and maintaining administrative records. A program director provided oversight for these activities, assisted the coordinator with planning and assessment, advised on problem areas such as relationships with community organizations, but typically did not have day-to-day involvement with the program or interactions with youth. Program coordinators and program directors, however, often shared responsibilities for planning and conducting staff training related to the PLYD Initiative.

Five of the nine PLPYD sites hired program coordinators or managers who did not have previous library experience to run their youth programs, with oversight provided by library administrative staff directing offices of Youth Services, Public Services, or School and Student Services. A majority of the sites also involved youth professionals from the community to assist in training and/or supervising youth, and facilitating programs, although to differing degrees. Additional staff included branch staff—branch managers, and adult and young adult librarians—at branches where PLPYD activities were located. They often were the primary source of training on library procedures and materials but had varying levels of responsibility for supervising youth.

Staff Development

Although it occurred much less frequently than youth training, staff development was a key strategy in implementing the PLPYD Initiative. Much of the basis for staff training in the implementation of PLPYD was drawn from the ideas and practices of the youth development field, which shaped the planning of the PLPYD Initiative and continued to play an important role in program implementation. Most of this training was directed at program staff and young adult and children’s librarians, but some included branch managers and adult librarians as well. Some sites provided joint training for both adult and teen staff together, which adult staff reported as very useful.

Three urban library systems—Baltimore, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia—also included security guards in staff training. As a library administrator at one of these sites emphasized, training in “positive youth development” was particularly important not only for “adult librarians that don’t have experience working with kids” but other staff as well. In her words: “If I want positive youth development to happen and mentoring to happen, I can’t have guards like prison guards.”

Staff development happened through formal trainings provided by outside youth development professionals as well as through regular, system wide staff meetings. In meetings, program staff and young adult librarians gave project updates, talked about adolescent needs and development, and discussed ways to improve library services, space, and collections for young adults. Formal trainings included half-day workshops held at the library or in the community and, at one site, a six-session course on youth development taught by a community college instructor. Other training experiences were ones related to the type of work staff were doing with youth, such as computer technology and homework help. For example, staff involved in a homework help program attended a “literacy basics” training, which introduced them to multi-sensory learning, phonemic awareness, and reading techniques.

PLPYD program staff, library branch staff, and library administrators received additional training through attendance at national ALA and PLA conferences, meetings facilitated by the Urban Libraries Council and the Academy for Educational Development, and on-site

Table 6. Themes in PLPYD Training for Library Staff

Theme	% of Training*
YA services, working with teens and using youth development ideas in the library	42%
Computer technology and resources	25%
General principles of youth development	24%
Homework help program orientation and skills (literacy, behavior management, etc.)	21%
PLPYD grant progress reports, planning, and evaluation with non project library staff	21%

*Based on 150 site-based staff training events held between July 1, 2000, and June 30, 2002. Percentages total more than 100 because many trainings had more than one theme

consultation two or three times a year by the Urban Libraries Council. The Urban Libraries Council also fostered networking among the nine libraries and cross-site visits, which allowed program and library staff to learn from the experiences of other libraries participating in the Initiative. In the view of several program directors, the opportunity to learn from staff of other library systems was one of the highlights of the PLYD Initiative. One program director reflected:

I had been in this work for 25 years, and it was such a shot in the arm to look at, first of all, working with teens in the library in a different way, and then to have all these smart people. The opportunities were just provided for you to interact with them and work with them, to share ideas and learn from them. Just that part was worth it—it was priceless.

Community Partnerships

Partnerships were an important element in the PLYD Initiative. During the 3-year implementation period, the libraries developed new relationships with a wide range of outside organizations in the implementation of the PLYD Initiative. The nine library systems differed in how they went about developing relationships with outside organizations, the purposes of their partnerships, and the extent to which they and their partners shared responsibility for youth programming. The libraries also differed in terms of whether their relationships were contractual or voluntary.

Across the nine sites, more than 200 outside organizations were involved at some point between April 2000 and June 2002. Although the sites had contacts with a large number of different organizations (ranging from 12 to 48 per site), only about a fourth of them represented long-term relationships. More than half (57%) of these organizations were involved for only one quarter of the 27-month period, 18 percent for two quarters, and 25 percent for three quarters or more. With the exception of Fort Bend County and Washoe County, none of the PLYD libraries developed long-term relationships—three quarters or longer—with more than four or five community organizations.

Because one goal of the Initiative was to create sustainable relationships with community organizations, we examined those that were reported at least twice in two separate quarters during the 27-month data collection period to understand the types of organizations involved in PLYD and their roles. First, the most frequent types of organizations involved in PLYD were youth development programs, youth-serving agencies, youth jobs programs, and public schools. Other organizations included colleges, social service and philanthropic organizations, technology training centers, career and college preparation programs, churches, media (television, radio, and

Table 7. Length of Involvement of PLYD Community Partners*

Time Period	No. and % of Partners
One quarter	130 (57%)
Two quarters	38 (18%)
Three quarters or longer	52 (25%)
Total	210

*During a 27-month period between April 1, 2000, and June 30, 2002

Table 8. Most Common Partners in PLYD*

Organization	No. of Sites
Youth development program/youth serving organizations/youth center (e.g., YMCA, Boy Scouts, Butterfly Project,)	7
Youth employment program or agency focused on low-income youth	5
College or career preparation program (School-to-Work, Communities in Schools)	5
Middle or high school	4
College	4
Consultant with expertise in work with youth	4
Community media organization with experience in youth projects	3
Church	2

*Partner organizations involved for at least 2 quarters between April 1, 2000 to June 30, 2002.

print), banks and businesses (GAP, Kinko's), community arts programs, youth development programs, health organizations, and parks and recreation centers.

Community organizations played a variety of roles in the implementation of PLPYD. Most of the partnerships evolved for specific purposes to accomplish the goals of the PLPYD programs. As Table 9 indicates, the most frequent roles were assisting with program facilitation, youth training, and youth recruitment; and providing space and logistical support. Community centers, schools, churches, and city parks departments provided space and other facilities for program activities, as well as transportation for youth and materials (for example, T-shirts for youth participants and snacks for children and youth in a homework help program). Schools, youth organizations, and city agencies served as venues for youth presentations and performances.

Table 9. Most Common Roles of PLPYD Community Partners

<i>Partner Role</i>	<i>% of Partners*</i>	<i>No. of Sites</i>
Assisted with youth program facilitation	38	8
Received services and resources from library	21	6
Provided resources (facilities, transportation, materials) to program	19	6
Provided non-technology training and information to youth	16	8
Assisted in youth recruitment	10	5
Provided technology and media training for youth in community research and advocacy strategies	10	6
Held meetings and events in which youth participated, performed, presented, or observed	10	2
Provided information and training for staff (evaluation, program administration, and youth development)	6	3

*Based on reports of 90 partners involved during at least two quarters between April 1, 2000, and June 30, 2002. Some partners had more than one role.

A number of the outside organizations involved in PLPYD contributed services and expertise that were beyond the capacity of project and library staff. Some libraries relied heavily on schools and youth-serving organizations to help engage low-income and minority youth who were not regular users of the library. In these partnerships, community organizations performed functions that made libraries uneasy given their mission as a democratic institution open to all. A few program coordinators reported that library staff were not comfortable asking youth applicants questions about family income or were prohibited from doing so by library policy. Therefore, they relied on youth resource centers, faith-based organizations, and teen employment agencies to identify potential participants and assist in the interview and selection process. As a result, some of the PLPYD projects were able to reach a wider range of youth than they might have without the support of these other organizations.

"Initially we were a source for some of the kids that come into the program. Now the community is very much aware of it so the program coordinator gets calls from parents and community leaders all the time. But initially when the program started he did not have a pool of kids so we were able to help with that. And then occasionally he'll call and say, 'I've got a situation going on with a kid, do you mind?' And I'll go down and talk and do whatever needs to be done. If we need to do a referral of some type, I'm tapped into those resources. So it's a good fit all the way around."

~PLPYD Partner

Outside organizations also were involved in providing curricular resources for youth training experiences or actually conducting youth development activities. In most cases, sites contracted with and paid outside agencies to provide training sessions on job skills, technology,

or personal development; in a few instances, staff of outside organizations volunteered their services or resources. A variety of public and private organizations—Job Corps, Junior Achievement, 4-H, the Boy Scouts, Women in Communities, Weed and Seed, among others—conducted youth leadership and social skills training for PLPYD projects. The Workforce Development Council in King County was a resource for project staff in their efforts to develop job descriptions for teens and plan training experiences. A Jobs Corps agency in Tucson shared its social skills curriculum with PLPYD project staff to use in developing training for library staff. Additionally, educational organizations, including community colleges and Kaplan Educational Services, offered PSAT/SAT workshops for youth participating in the PLPYD Initiative.

"We partnered with [a community arts organization]. They're going to offer workshops for neighborhood teens like doll making, papermaking, jewelry making, and I'm trying to do poetry workshops. It's also one way to get [the PLPYD program] into another branch in the system."

~PLPYD program coordinator

In addition, partner organizations provided transportation, space, facilities, and material resources such as computers and fax machines. Other partner roles included helping to find funding to send youth to conferences, to pay youth to produce printed advertisements about youth employment opportunities, and to purchase T-shirts and tickets to festivals for youth. Community consultants and organizations also volunteered or were contracted to provide recreational and art activities to teens participating in PLPYD projects. In a collaboration between a private school and

the PLPYD project in Fort Bend County, a school staff member developed a computer "e-mail buddies" project for her students and the PLPYD youth to communicate and share experiences with one another.

In Washoe County, teens participating in the Story-Telling-To-Go Action Team were trained and led by a paid outside consultant who is a well-known professional storyteller. They in turn performed stories at a variety of community organizations as well as at branches. Spanish Dial-A-Story youth worked intensively with a local video production agency, hired at a reduced fee, to produce high-quality recordings of stories in Spanish for children throughout the county. In Brooklyn, the PLPYD project collaborated with a mental health organization to produce a documentary video about the Crown Heights neighborhood. Staff of the community organization coordinated the project, and the library's Information Technology Team provided resources and expertise with computer and video equipment.

Probably the best example of a library providing resources to other organizations occurred in Fort Bend County, where the library has a sprawling service territory. With funding from the PLPYD grant, the library placed computers, wiring for Internet access, printers, craft materials, and youth employees directly in local community centers, including churches and neighborhood organizations, in addition to branch libraries. They also made technical services available for computer maintenance. Tech Teens were trained and placed at these sites to assist patrons, both children and adults, with computer use and other activities. The library's relationships with community organizations were reciprocal, according to program staff, benefiting the library as well as the community organizations. One program director reported:

"Most of the children in my area can't afford a computer at home, so having computers at the center will give them the opportunity to be involved in the computer, learn all the different things, and when they go back to school, they can talk to their friends about being on the Internet.... It will really enhance them and build their self-esteem."

~PLPYD Partner

[We received from our partners] barrier-free access to target population, facilities with permanent, dedicated area for library program, heating and air-conditioning, restrooms, kitchens, safe environment, security, staff person to oversee program at site, shared responsibility for computer maintenance, help with statistical reporting, support for Youth Advisory Council, participation in evaluation of program, one representative to serve on the Community Advisory Committee, expertise in working with low-income youth in high crime areas, providing transportation to and from library and sites, cultural sensitivity, and bilingual staff.

A similar, although not as comprehensive, example was found in the Oakland PASS! program's collaboration with the city's Parks & Recreation Department. Four recreation centers made space available for after-school homework centers and provided supervisory staff and recreation assistants at each site. In turn, the library paid for program leaders, assistants, and Teen Mentors and invited park staff to participate in self-development and leadership training activities provided to the PASS! Teen Mentors. Finally, in Charlotte, a mutual relationship developed between Weed and Seed, a federally funded community program, and the West Boulevard Branch Library. In the first year, staff of Weed and Seed referred some youth to the PLYD project and, in turn, youth participants in PLYD took part in a summer camp sponsored by Weed and Seed that included recreation, an exploration trip, and social and life skills training. Library program staff and staff of Weed and Seed continued to communicate throughout the Initiative about the needs and progress of individual youth they were jointly serving.

As described in this chapter, the nine PLYD libraries developed a wide variety of youth programs in very different institutional and community settings. At the same time, the implementation of these programs involved similar activities across the nine sites. Primary activities during the first year of the Initiative included hiring program staff; planning program activities; recruiting, training, and placing youth; engaging community organizations to assist in program implementation; and training library staff in youth development principles. The second year of the Initiative saw the refinement of program activities and youth roles, the development of new programs, the continuation of youth recruitment and training for youth and staff, and the evolution of relationships with community organizations. Library and program staff began to plan ways to sustain their initiatives toward the end of the second year and during the third year, either by establishing permanent staff positions devoted to youth programming within library budgets or seeking funding through private foundations. Although program activities and youth and staff training continued, recruitment efforts ceased at a number of sites where programs were filled or were not likely to continue beyond the third year.

Initiative leaders reported that the funding and time for planning 9-months prior to implementation was very important, although they could not always anticipate how long it would take to hire program coordinators, recruit youth, or develop relationships with community organizations. Leaders also reported that the technical assistance and support provided by the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) was crucial to both the initiation and the development of their programs, particularly training in youth development principals, regular one-on-one consultation from ULC staff, and the fostering of cross-site communication.

SECTION TWO: IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter 3

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The PLPYD Initiative, as described in Chapter 2, was a broad undertaking, one that included implementing new programs, jobs, and training for youth, hiring new staff, creating new staff development experiences, developing new relationships with community organizations, and exploring ways to finance and sustain these activities. The 3-year implementation period was marked by both challenges and accomplishments. This section examines three aspects of the implementation of the PLPYD Initiative. This chapter focuses on the recruitment and participation of youth and the factors that influenced their participation. The next chapter, Chapter 4, considers the staff and institutional factors that affected program implementation. Chapter 5 reports on a study of the cost and financing of two central program approaches in the PLPYD Initiative: homework help and computer assistance programs.

Recruitment and Selection of Youth

The examination of youth participation in PLPYD begins with outreach and recruitment: specifically, the efforts of program staff to engage low-income, minority, and hard-to-reach teens and non-library users. The goal of the Initiative, as mentioned in Chapter 1, was to explore ways for public libraries “to provide high quality educational enrichment and career development programs for underserved low-income teenagers and children.”¹¹ Toward that end, program staff tried a variety of ways to recruit teens for PLPYD activities during the first year of the Initiative.

The primary strategies in the beginning of the Initiative included distributing written fliers and application forms to libraries, schools, and community centers; asking library staff, teachers, school counselors, and school librarians to tell their students about PLPYD; and soliciting referrals from youth employment agencies and youth-serving organizations. Increasingly, over time, teens themselves became an important means of bringing in new participants. No one strategy for recruiting teens was found to be universally effective for these public libraries seeking to engage youth in new ways. As one PLPYD project director advised: “You have to work on recruitment from all different angles You do some recruiting at the branch level; you do some in the school.”

As a general rule, “personal contact” was the most effective means of reaching youth. Branch staff recruited teens they knew or teens who had been volunteering in the library to work in the PLPYD programs. In addition, teens who saw other teens working at the library often inquired about how they could gain employment at the library. For example, one participant reported that after she brought her friends to the library and showed them a

“ We put out signs, we sent information to people who were interested; as you came in the staff at both desks would inquire. And we had a lot of applications and we think we got some good candidates. So now a lot of teens do migrate up here and they want to become a part of the program as a result of their friends being here.”

~Branch Librarian

¹¹ DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund, “Request for Implementation Grant Proposals,” (Urban Libraries Council, 1999).

part of what she does (read books to children), they asked if they could work at the library. Moreover, two of her friends later came back without her and read to children. Given that most adolescents are influenced by peer pressure, it should be useful for library staff to look at how youth understand their jobs and how they present it to others. Youth who feel confident in explaining their jobs might be able to dispel stereotypes about the library. One PLPYD program coordinator reported: “The program has helped to reduce stereotypes teens have of librarians [because] students are recommending other teens They know this is a cool opportunity. Their friends are recommending it so it must be okay.”

Schools were another important source of referrals to PLPYD programs when library or project staff established direct contacts with teachers or guidance counselors first. Simply mailing or faxing information fliers and application forms to schools without personal contact was not effective. Baltimore staff, for example, discovered that although mass mailings of Community Youth Corps project information to schools and community organizations yielded some inquiries from interested youth, recruitment really took off when the program coordinator started making personal visits to schools to talk about the program.

Placing program fliers and application forms in branch libraries worked at one site because several of the youth who eventually became involved in a PLPYD program, including several who were home-schooled, were accustomed to using the library for schoolwork and as a source of information on opportunities in the community. In general, however, without personal contact, printed material alone did not elicit much interest from teens who noticed it.

Library staff had varying degrees of responsibility for selecting youth for PLPYD programs. In several sites, citywide youth employment agencies and community organizations, including churches and faith-based youth centers, played an integral role in promoting and recruiting teens for PLPYD jobs. In a few instances, outside organizations actually selected the youth, particularly in the case of the Youth Employment Partnership in Oakland. However, in most cases, they helped to identify students who then were screened and interviewed by project and/or library staff. At some sites, the PLPYD project staff conducted interviews and made placement decisions in conjunction with other adult leaders. Although activities were held at branch libraries, branch staff usually had little input into youth selection. At other sites, however, supervising branch librarians had a major role in screening and selecting youth for library positions. In one project, PLPYD staff conducted initial interviews with youth applicants, but they then shared responsibility for follow-up interviews and final selection of teens with library staff of the branches in which they would be placed.

“At first I was volunteering at the library [through a program called Youth Works]. Then during the summer [the branch head] called me and told me about the program and asked me if I were interested.... I liked it. I like working with kids, helping people out.... And because it involved helping people with computers. I just like computers.”

~17-year-old boy

Obstacles to Recruitment

There rarely were difficulties in finding participants for youth programs or employees for jobs after the initial start-up period. However, recruitment did not always proceed at an even pace. Some projects were challenged by human resource policies within the library that placed restrictions on employing teens or on the range of roles and responsibilities for youth.

“My grandma stays up the street and I was involved in her community because I was over her house. And we used to go to these meetings on Thursdays, and the community leader, she recommended me down to the library At first I wasn't interested because it seemed boring working in a library but when I came down here, I got interested As I got to meet the people that was already working here, they was nice, and they was telling me their experiences. So I felt it'd be fun.”

14-year-old girl

In addition, it was hard to anticipate difficulties in recruiting and hiring youth for the PLPYD projects. For example, one project director found recruitment moving more slowly than expected because of a lack of branch staff to assist with making school visits or contacting youth already in the library. Another project director, implementing four different youth programs, complained that it was hard to manage the fast pace of recruitment, an intense interview process, and criteria for selection. She had more applicants for some positions than anticipated and was reluctant to turn

people away. A third project director had an unusually high number of applicants the first year—more than 200 for 12 positions. Yet, she went ahead with plans to conduct interviews with every teen that applied. She explained:

This is a development program and for many of the kids, it was their first interview. Any help I could give them in the interview process, I would. It was exhausting, especially since when dealing with youth, you have to be energetic and enthusiastic. In one area I had 100 interviews, in another 60. I called all of the ones that were not asked back for a second interview to let them know how they could improve [in a future interview situation].

Another recruitment challenge was arranging to pay youth participants, particularly younger teens. Matters that are non-issues when hiring individuals age 18 or older become more of a problem when hiring youth that are age 14 or younger. Although some sites saw the value of hiring youth who were younger than 12, state labor laws restricted the hours and type of work that children under age 14 can do. A program director at a county library system reported: “The whole process to pay the kids has not been smooth.” She explained that the local government has certain rules about paying youth, based on federal child labor laws, and the IRS will have to be involved in the payment process for any youth who earns more than a specified amount. She considered paying youth a stipend. However, she wondered whether some teens would remain with the program long enough to earn the stipend because they might want to be paid sooner. Knowing that they would have to wait until the end of the year for their stipend, some youth might seek employment in other areas. Although a community organization volunteered to hold the youths’ payments in escrow and then pay the youth, there were issues of trust to address that were beyond the library’s current capacity.

The Selection Process

With the exception of the youth advisory groups, the PLPYD sites were further limited by funding, staffing, and program content in the number of youth that could be involved in programs or jobs at any one time. (As noted in Chapter 2, of the more than 1,300 teens who were recruited or expressed interest in PLPYD activities during a 27-month period, 737 teens were recorded as actually participating in these activities.) Thus, project staff had to establish guidelines for selecting participants. The most successful approach to selecting youth was to focus more on positive attitudes, interests, and willingness to learn than on particular skills. Literacy and language skills were additional factors considered at one site with a large number of

applicants, including several from immigrant families. Several sites tried to assess leadership potential or a sense of responsibility in youth, based on interviews and adult recommendations. Interestingly, at one site, library policies prohibited project staff from asking teen applicants personal information about their interests or hobbies, but staff could ask teens about their skills and goals.

Additional eligibility criteria in some of the PLYD projects served to restrict job opportunities to a more select group of teens. For example, Oakland’s PASS! and Charlotte’s Teen Succeed! programs required participants to meet and maintain a minimum grade point average (“B” in the PASS! program and a “C+” in the Teen Succeed! program). Although previous volunteer experience was not a stated requirement, most Teen Library Assistants in Philadelphia’s LEAP program were selected by branch staff from teens who already had spent a period of time volunteering in the library. The age requirement at Baltimore, Charlotte, and Fort Bend changed over the course of the grant. Fort Bend found that their original target group of youth, ages 14 to 16, were not very interested in the program, so the age requirement was lowered. Baltimore discovered that high school students also need placements to fulfill community service requirements and expanded their age range upward.

“Youth applying for the Tech Teen program should be between the ages of 14 and 16 and qualify for free and reduced lunch. We have lowered the age requirement. We still require students be from low-income families but they do not have to be on free lunch. We look for leadership qualities, experience with computers and other youth. Skills and abilities are important, but enthusiasm and attitude are more important.”
~PLPYD site recruitment report

Reflecting one of the primary goals of the PLYD Initiative, all of the sites directed their volunteer and job training programs to low-income youth in their communities. Because public libraries traditionally have resisted efforts to target services to particular social or economic groups or to collect demographic information about its users, it was difficult to identify potential youth participants. Although a few of the projects required their youth to demonstrate that they qualified for reduced-price lunch status in school, a majority of the libraries loosely identified low-income teens on the basis of where they lived or relied on schools and other community partners to provide low-income and minority teens for jobs and

volunteer opportunities. According to one project director: “The [only] criteria is low-income, which we define as living in low-income areas in the city.”

The PLYD program staff were encouraged not only to direct their efforts at low-income and minority youth, but to focus on so-called underserved or hard-to-reach teens. Although never well defined, this was understood to mean either teens who were not likely to be library users for various reasons or teens who might need extra support to benefit from the PLYD experience.¹² All of the sites made some effort to go beyond their usual boundaries in selecting youth. However, based on evidence from staff and youth surveys and interviews, only a small number of the PLYD participants fairly could be described as “hard to reach.” For example, a few of the sites at some point during the Initiative connected with juvenile courts to provide placements for adjudicated youth, although the number who came in through this source was small. Several sites also worked with city or federal youth employment and workforce

¹² YALSA, the American Library Association young adult professional organization, provides a staff development program called “Serving the Underserved,” which seeks to enhance the skills of generalist library staff who, it is assumed, have an antipathy toward teen users (Walter & Meyers, 2003).

development organizations, although except for Oakland, only a small number of youth were recruited this way.

Thus, there was a tension between using outside organizations and library staff to select youth for the PLYD programs. On one hand, library staff knew more about the kind of teens that would do well in the library. As one librarian observed: “Our strongest youth are the ones that were already volunteering in the library.” Having staff assist in choosing youth for their branches also helped to build their acceptance of the youth program. On the other hand, they were less likely to reach youth not already using the library. Although schools, youth organizations, youth employment programs, and occasionally city or county juvenile justice departments brought more “hard to reach” teens into the library, the varied priorities and goals of outside organizations influenced which teens were identified for jobs, and they did not always fit well in the library environment.

Teens described as “at-risk youth” who were placed in library positions by youth agencies did not always measure up to the expectations of library staff in terms of work behaviors and attitudes. They often needed extra support to help them make the transition—and that extra support required time and expertise that was beyond the capacity of most library staff. Staff at one site recounted an extreme example of an experience with a girl given a position as a computer assistant in a branch library. She had no knowledge or interest in computers, showed no initiative to learn the requirements of her job, and was not good at interacting with patrons. In a short time, she stopped coming to work and failed to come to several appointments set up to discuss her work. At one point, staff reported, the young woman and her father became verbally abusive. Although this was an unusual example, it emphasized the need for clear communication between the library and the referring agency about the needs of the library and staff’s capacity to work with more difficult teens.

Staff and youth perceptions about the ability of the library to attract teens from diverse groups varied widely. As a general rule, most library staff thought that the PLYD projects had successfully engaged low-income minority teens, including some non-library users, but that they could do more to engage so-called at-risk youth. Although staff sometimes commented that PLYD youth were the “cream of the crop,” this tended to be the view of a minority. More staff expressed the view that the PLYD youth were “typical” teenagers compared with their peers, although they seemed to have more self-confidence or be somewhat better students. Some teens and staff also voiced the opinion that their library projects tended to engage library “regulars,” high achievers, or youth who were already involved in extracurricular activities. Other youth, on the other hand, talked about PLYD as an opportunity to get to know teens from diverse backgrounds and youth who they normally would not become friends with at school.

Characteristics of Youth Participants

To learn more about the youth who participated in the PLYD Initiative, we conducted a participation study consisting of individual interviews with a sample of 105 program participants during 2001 and 2002. Three-fourths of this sample were drawn from three sites—Philadelphia, Tucson, and Washoe County—and the remainder were scattered equally among the other six sites. Although these teens could not capture all of the diversity among youth in the full sample

of PLPYD participants, as shown in Table 10, they were similarly diverse in terms of age, gender, and ethnic background. They also represented teens with experiences in the wide variety of youth roles in the PLPYD programs.

These interviews with youth, supplemented by reports of program and library branch staff, revealed both similarities and differences within and across the sites in terms of youth characteristics. In terms of similarities, PLPYD participants as a group appeared to be *service-oriented*. They emphasized helping others as a reason for participating and as a source of satisfaction in their jobs and relationships with staff and patrons. Some Latino youth, in particular, expressed the desire to open the library to Spanish-speaking members of their community for whom the library remains intimidating and remote. Although some of the participants had had previous experience in volunteer capacities, for others PLPYD was their first experience.

PLPYD youth also could be described as *goal-oriented*, meaning that they viewed PLPYD activities as an opportunity. In interviews, they often expressed the belief that what they do now has an effect on their future. Many had specific ideas about eventual jobs or careers and saw themselves as bound for higher education after high school. Library staff also reported that although similar to their peers in most respects, many PLPYD teens showed unusual maturity and commitment to school and work. At the same time, like many teens, they differed in the scope and practicality of their future plans and their awareness of the steps required to reach their goals.

In addition, PLPYD participants were *supported by family*. Indeed, for some observers, this level of support was what set the PLPYD youth apart from other low-income teens. An outside youth development consultant to one of the PLPYD volunteer programs noted:

The only thing that could make [the PLPYD youth] unique would be that the majority of them, not everyone, but the majority have some level of real parental support. Somebody who cares where they are, who's willing to get them where they need to go [at least] occasionally. Their parents or aunts, grandmothers, or uncles, show up for things, [whereas] other kids' parents don't.

Although teens usually made their own decision to become involved in a PLPYD activity or job, they were supported in their decision by at least one family member. In areas with poor public transportation systems, teens often depended on parents for getting to and from work. They

Table 10. Characteristics of 105 Youth in PLPYD Participation Study

% Participants (n = 105)*	
Gender	
Male	40
Female	60
Grade	
6-8	16
9-10	36
11-12	30
Post-high school	18
Ethnicity	
Black/African-American	32
White	27
Hispanic/Latino	19
Asian	6
Multi-racial	13

*Individual interviews were conducted with 105 youth, 25 from Philadelphia, 24 from Tucson, 25 from Washoe County, and 31 from the other six sites. Some youth were interviewed twice, resulting in a total of 142 interviews.

I was interested because I like to help kids. I like to be around where kids need you, and plus it's learning, too. So if no kids are there I can do my own homework. Because I'm right in the library, I can find anything I need. Plus [getting] my service hours, even though I already had all of mine, it sounded like a good thing.

~13-year-old girl

"My mom was really excited for me when I got the job. She gives me a ride to work every day. She makes sure I know my schedule. She really keeps me on top of things and encourages me to do good."

~15-year-old boy

often attributed their beliefs about the importance of hard work and having a positive attitude toward life to family members.

In terms of differences among PLYD participants, two notable ones were the nature of their *previous experiences with the library* and their *involvement in other extracurricular activities*. For some youth, drawn by an interest in computer technology or the desire to work with people, the PLYD project was their first real contact with the library and its resources. Other teens said they were familiar with the library but used it primarily for homework or to meet friends on occasion. And there were youth who reported that they loved reading and/or had visited the library regularly since early childhood. Most of the youth in the latter two groups—70 percent of the sample of 105 youth interviewed—reported that they had a library card; more than half of them had obtained it before the age of 10.

Teen participants also differed in the extent of their involvement in other out-of-school activities. For a majority, PLYD seemed to be their primary structured after-school activity. Others reported schedules that included a variety of athletic, social, family, and academic commitments. Youths' involvement in extracurricular activities also varied across the sites and within sites. For example, only about a third of the youth in the Washoe County youth advisory group appeared to be heavily involved in activities outside of working at the library, whereas youth in the Tucson youth advisory group were highly involved in extracurricular activities. And within the Tucson PLYD project, teens participating in the Tucson advisory group were much more involved in extracurricular activities than teens hired as branch-based Computer Aides. These differences might reflect differences in recruitment strategies as well as the age and other characteristics of participants.

One pattern that emerged was that youth who were interviewed in both 2001 and 2002 described their schedules as more demanding in 2002 than in 2001, largely because of an increase in their schoolwork. This is not surprising, given the greater academic demands on students in the upper grades, and, perhaps, an increased focus of these students on school. As we will discuss in the next chapter, staff flexibility in scheduling youth work and volunteer schedules was a critical factor in maintaining the participation of some of these older teens.

Factors Influencing Youth Participation

Interviews with staff and youth participants revealed three general categories of factors that encouraged or discouraged youth participation in the PLYD Initiative—program structure, program quality, and youth factors. The first category included both program parameters such as the content, structure, and frequency of activities. Program quality had to do with the quality of youth's relationships with peers and adults and the extent to which activities gave them opportunities to develop skills and take initiative. The third category involved personal characteristics of teens themselves—the reasons for their interest in PLYD jobs and programs; the degree to which the PLYD programs conflicted with school, family obligations, or other extracurricular activities; and logistical issues such as transportation. In this section, we begin with a discussion of program structure and program quality, and then consider youth factors.

Program Structure

Job and Training Requirements

The nine libraries differed in the intensity of various jobs, programs, and activities and in the level of job training experiences provided to, and expected of, teens. There were differences in how long PLPYD activities were designed to last and how frequently youth were expected to participate during a specified time period. In some sites and in some activities, such as voluntary youth advisory groups, expectations for attendance seemed to be fairly low. Or, activities such as community mapping, arts, or video production projects were designed to last for relatively short periods of time.

However, expectations for participation in other activities, especially ones requiring specific knowledge and skills, were more stringent and required considerable commitment from youth. Both training in specific job skills and experiences to develop teens personally and academically were integrated into work schedules on a regular basis. Teens employed as homework helpers or computer assistants were often asked to commit to a 9-month or year-long stay so there would be time to learn appropriate skills sufficiently to function independently in their roles and staff would benefit from their services. (It also took time to develop good relationships between youth and staff.)

Aside from the content of training, one of the primary issues for program staff was deciding how much time to devote to training, and, relatedly, when and where to hold training. As we will discuss in Chapter 6, youth reported a large number of benefits from their training. However, they also expressed dissatisfaction with some of the content and frequency of the training, for example, if they felt there was too much training or if it was not relevant to their job. In addition, it was not always easy to schedule training sessions to accommodate youths' schedules or find the right balance between not enough and too much training. Some sites chose to train intensively for a week or longer during the summer months when youth were more available. Others incorporated more frequent training into the school year, holding meetings every other Friday or one Saturday a month.

Table 11. The PLPYD Initiative: Youth Roles

SITE	Youth Roles
Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore, MD)	Community Youth Corps (CYC) teens conducted after-school activities, including homework help and technology assistance, and participated in arts, literacy, and leadership development experiences.
Brooklyn Public Library (Brooklyn, NY)	Youth participated in a variety of projects including a Teen Advisory Group, video documentary projects, youth community-mapping, the Book Buddy after-school program, Teen Time, a newsletter, and an educational computer program for children.
Public Library of Charlotte/Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC)	Teens Succeed! participants operated a Copy and Design Center, assisted staff with library tasks, and developed services for the community, including a Hip-Hop Poetry program and a newsletter.
Fort Bend County Library (Richmond, TX)	The Tech Teen program engaged youth to assist children, peers, and adults with computers at community centers and library branches. Tech teens also participated in youth advisory councils at each site.
King County Library System (Issaquah, WA)	The Techno Teens program employed youth to assist patrons in the use of library resources, including computers and the Internet, and staff with a variety of typical library tasks.
Oakland Public Library (Oakland, CA)	Youth were hired as Teen Mentors in the PASS! after-school and homework help program, which ran at ten library branches and four park sites. Teens also participated in a Youth Leadership Council, a Teen Technology Docents program, and teen homework centers.
Free Library of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA)	Youth were hired as Teen Library Assistants (TLAs) and Associate Leaders (ALs) in the LEAP Homework Help program. Youth also planned and conducted annual youth summits.
Tucson Pima Public Library (Tucson, AZ)	Teens participated in a volunteer Library Subcommittee, a Computer Aide program that hired teens for computer assistance and other services, and the Teen Advocate program, which trained teens to give public presentations about the library.
Washoe County Library System (Reno, NV)	Youth were employed in one of four Action Teams: Spanish Dial-A-Story, the Wizards technology program, the Storytelling-To-Go Action Team, and a Youth Adult Partnership (YAP).

Sometimes youth did not understand the purpose of some of this training or did not see how it connected to their library activities, or another area of their lives. When teens trained in computer skills had to wait several months before they could use them in the library, or were not allowed to use all of the skills they had acquired, they were frustrated. At one of the homework help programs, youth complained about too many trainings about time management, filling out time cards, and responsible employee behaviors and not enough practical information on working with children, tutoring in specific subject areas, and developing other activities to do with children beyond homework. Teens participating in leadership development exercises or community service activities beyond the library did not see the link between these experiences and other areas of their lives or their usefulness for the future. Thus, it was challenging to provide the right balance between skills that were oriented to specific jobs; skills that were geared toward the development of a good work ethic, personal skills, and teamwork; and practical skills such as money management, coping with stress and conflicts, and resume writing.

Job Mobility

Some of the sites changed program requirements during the implementation period, almost always in ways that would extend rather than shorten youth participation—albeit for a small number of teens. The unique structure created in Philadelphia’s LEAP program that allows youth to “move through the ranks” and the efforts of other sites to build longevity into their programs should be highlighted as an important factor to maintaining youth involvement. Youth involved in LEAP seemed well aware of the opportunities to build upon the work they were doing and move from a volunteer position to a paid position as a Teen Library Assistant (TLA), and then from a TLA to an Associate Leader position upon completion of high school, which seemed to motivate them to work hard and stay in the program. They commented that they did not know of other jobs for teens that provide this kind of advancement. In the words of one youth: “It’s good you can move up Basically, as the program progresses, we progress.”

Baltimore’s Community Youth Corps was originally designed to engage teens only until they completed their community service hours, usually no more than a 3- to 6-month period. However, staff discovered that some teens wanted to continue their involvement in the library and created a youth leadership council and opportunities for summer employment through a public jobs program for a small group of teens. Although no formal structure was established, the copy and design job in Charlotte and the Tucson computer aide job also appear to have some room for job mobility. For example, one of the Charlotte youth who had worked at the copy and design center as a “clerk” for a year was promoted to the position of “design manager.” In addition, a Tucson computer aide was promoted to the position of Computer Instructor. She taught older people about computers and also participated in interviews for potential computer aides. A sense of mobility and promotion may provide youth with the motivation to work hard and do a good job.

Job Flexibility

In addition to the length of tenure established for different kinds of activities in PLYD, the flexibility of policies and procedures for participation also affected teens’ ability to maintain their commitment to a program. This flexibility was not necessarily part of the program

structure. In fact, it was often difficult for library staff to schedule teens because the times they were needed at the library were not always compatible with their other after-school commitments. Thus, this flexibility was attributable to the commitment of staff to work *with* youth, support them, and keep them involved. Most sites allowed participants to suspend participation during times of extracurricular sports, academic, or family commitments, or for reasons of health. According to several youth we interviewed, the willingness of librarians or project staff to accommodate their schedules made it possible for them to remain involved in their library position. As one youth explained: “Flexibility is a must for me in staying here.” Youth also recognized that this flexibility was a big benefit of their job and perhaps a unique element of the library job—something they would not get in fast-food or retail jobs.

Financial Incentives

Outside of traditional library page positions, most activities for teens in public libraries have been done on a voluntary basis. However, based on the findings of research conducted during the planning phase that teens in low-income communities need jobs, a majority of the approaches to engaging youth in PLYD involved paid employment. A few projects that were not able to provide hourly wages tried to provide stipends or gift certificates upon completion of a certain number of hours of work to teens to motivate their involvement. Baltimore’s Community Youth Corps was the only large-scale PLYD program in which teens received community service hours for their involvement.

Across the sites, as mentioned earlier, teens reported that money was a factor in their decision to join a PLYD activity. At the same time, it appeared that the personal and social rewards, especially their relationships with adult staff and peers, outweighed money in *keeping* youth in their positions. The majority of the youth we interviewed said they would continue to work at the library if they were no longer paid because they are learning valuable skills, getting good experience, and having fun. As a Charlotte youth explained, working at the library is an opportunity for teens to grow and learn, not just earn money. She reported that her supervisor told her and others: “If you’re here for the money you can get up and leave right now, because this is an opportunity for you that a lot of kids would like to have.”

“Pay is always important because I need the money. If I had enough money, then coming to this job [without pay] would be nice, something to do that gives me experience. But the pay is definitely a wonderful thing to have. It helps pay for my gas and food. It’s a major consideration and important.”
~18-year-old boy

At the same time, many youth commented that money was important in terms of financial need, feeling responsible or autonomous, and providing a sense of importance. Some of the youth in the Spanish Dial-A-Story program in Washoe County noted that the income from their job at the library helped to pay their parents’ bills. In Tucson, pay remained strongly important to the advocates throughout their participation in the program, suggesting it was more significant than other benefits, such as the chance to develop public-speaking skills. Teens in other sites, when asked if they would stay involved without pay, sometimes placed certain conditions on working at the library—such as working fewer hours or not doing the parts of the job they do not enjoy. Furthermore, there was some sense among teens and staff in volunteer programs that paying youth might increase participation and enhance perceptions of the value of the program among library staff and the community.

Program Quality

Another factor that influenced participation in PLPYD programs and jobs was the quality of experiences youth had, especially their relationships with adults and peers. The youth development literature (e.g., (Camino, 2000; Eccles & Appleton Gootman, 2002; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Larson, 2000; Larson, Hansen, & Walker, in press; Larson, et al., in press; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994; Walter & Meyers, 2003) suggests several key aspects of programs that can foster youth learning and development, which are presented in Box 2. These aspects include positive relationships with adults and peers; activities that are interesting and help to build skills; opportunities for youth to explore identity, take initiative, and make decisions within appropriate structures and boundaries; and activities that encourage connections with family, school, and community. This section looks at the PLPYD programs in relation to these important characteristics.

Box 2. Important Characteristics of Youth Development Programs

- **Positive relationships with adults and peers**, e.g., teens are seen as individuals and treated respectfully, interact in a friendly and comfortable way with other people, offer support to peers, and receive help and guidance from adult leaders that are matched to youth's abilities
- **Interesting activities that help to develop skills**, e.g., teens seem to be actively rather than passively involved in activities and to be learning new things without feeling frustrated or bored
- Opportunities for **initiative and decision-making within appropriate structures and boundaries**, e.g., teens are able to have input into activities, make decisions, and see the results of their decisions; and have opportunities to take on new responsibilities and leadership roles within program and job structures
- Activities that build **connections with family, school, and community**, e.g., teens have opportunities to provide service to the community and involve family and community members in their activities

The Quality of Relationships

Evidence from both youth and adults indicates that youth developed positive relationships with adult leaders and other library staff in the PLPYD programs. By most reports, program and library staff treated youth respectfully, valued their services, and tried to provide opportunities for them to take initiative and responsibility. Youth reported particularly strong relationships with some of the PLPYD program coordinators.

Positive relationships with library staff did not develop immediately. It usually took time to build relationships between teens and adult staff and for both adults and youth to appreciate the skills and perspectives of the other, especially those not used to working together. It was not uncommon for teens to note that library staff were “unfriendly” when they first started working at the library but became friendlier over time. Similarly, it was not uncommon for staff to complain about some of the teens’ behaviors when we interviewed them in the first year of the Initiative, and later, during the second and third years, to extol their contributions and accomplishments.

Respectful relationships. When asked about their relationships with adults and peers at the library, the majority of the youth responded that they were supported and treated respectfully by peers and adults alike. This respect could be seen in the careful approach that staff usually took in selecting youth for programs and jobs as well as the relationships that developed once teens were engaged. One youth, speaking about his peers that he works with at the library said: “If somebody is having a bad day, everybody is going to come to you and ask if you’re all right

because we feel like a family.” A boy in a library advisory group said about both its adult and youth members: “There are no put-downs. There could be criticism but nothing rude ... appropriate criticism.” Another youth said branch staff are very supportive of youth in the PLPYD program, adding they “root us on all the time.” A teen in a computer assistance program said one of the staff at her branch is very patient with her and “even stays overtime with us sometimes and works on the computers with us if we need help.”

There were only a few exceptions to these positive reports from youth about how they are treated by branch staff. A 17-year-old boy participating in a computer assistance program was bothered that library staff sometimes spoke to him like a child rather than a young adult, but he added that they seemed to be getting better. A girl participating in a homework help program reported: “Some of the library staff are very nice and very friendly. But I had to leave one branch because I didn’t like the way they treated the children and teens [who came in for help] and the teen [employees]. So, it varies [from branch to branch].” In another program, a girl told us that librarians seem to treat teens better when they know they are employed by the library. She said: “When I’m there with the [PLPYD program] group or they know who I am, they treat me differently than if I was to just walk into a library [where] they don’t know who I am, they don’t know that I’m involved with the library.”

“People have to have patience to do well in this job. You can’t take what the patrons say to you too seriously. The younger patrons are the easier ones to work with compared to the adults. The staff is good to work with. The library staff treats the computer aides like co-workers, not young adult patrons.”

~18 year-old girl

Interestingly, some youth reported more difficulties with adult patrons than with adult staff, for example, adult patrons who were discourteous when they were trying to help them with a computer problem. A small number of youth also reported that it can be difficult to have to tell peers to “quiet down” in the library or to ask peers or adults to give up a computer when their allotted time is up. Inconsiderate treatment by adult patrons and conflicts (or fears of conflicts) with peers are examples of potentially negative experiences (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003). They

also are important issues for adult leaders to recognize, on which to provide guidance and support to youth, and to address in youth training. Although the majority of youth feel library staff treat them with respect, if library patrons are not treating them with respect, their morale might be affected.¹³

Characteristics of exemplary adult staff. One of the factors in maintaining teens’ commitment to their library activities was their relationship with their adult program leaders and the library staff who helped to supervise them. Teens often cited individual adult staff as particularly encouraging and supportive. These adult leaders seemed to understand adolescent development and the importance of relationships in fostering participation. They came to know teens as individuals,

“[The program coordinator] has been like a role model for me. Whenever he says something, I value what he says because he always knows what’s best. And I don’t want to say that meaning like I don’t have a mind of my own, because I do. But I listen to what he says because he’s been here longer than me and he knows what’s going on. And he can see it from more than one perspective.”

~18-year-old male

¹³ Occasionally, library staff took a protective attitude toward their teens that actually prevented them experiencing and learning to handle difficult issues or people. At one site, a branch manager told us she was reluctant to have her teen technology assistant help patrons with computer problems because she feared they would be difficult to handle. The teen, on the other hand, complained about the lack of opportunity to use some of the skills he had developed in training.

established warm and friendly relationships, and genuinely seemed to enjoy their interactions with youth. One program coordinator emphasized that adults are responsible for bridging gaps between themselves and teens. In setting up a program in which teens would be in charge of running a copy and design center, he tried not to divide the program into categories of adult activities and teen activities, but established goals to accomplish that everyone could work on together. He expressed the belief that teens “naturally like to help,” and the main difference between them and adults is that “they do not know how to help—but they can learn.”

Within appropriate boundaries, adult staff also were willing to share their own experiences growing up as examples for youth to follow or learn from and to provide guidance on personal issues.¹⁴ For example, a 14-year-old girl in a youth advisory group at one site reported that she just “connected” with the adult leader and appreciated a referral she provided to a counseling program for a personal problem. Another member of the group, a 14-year-old boy, reported that this individual “is always there for everyone, and she always says they can go to her for help. But if you do something wrong, she will let you know it—but she doesn’t make you feel bad about it.”

Similar comments were made about the adult leader at another site. When a 16-year-old girl was asked what the best part of her job was, she said it was the PLPYD project coordinator. She explained: “He just inspires me to do better. He teaches me a lot of things. I feel like I’m a better person for being around him.” Other youth reported that this individual respected and cared for them but also challenged and disciplined them appropriately. He motivated them to work hard and feel good about themselves and their future.

At yet another site, teens in a computer assistance program were impressed with a young technology trainer on staff at the library who had dropped out of high school at one time and then gone on to higher education. Youth in this program said not only were his computer skills “awesome,” but that they gained inspiration and motivation from the fact that he had overcome some odds to get to where he was today. One participant who was a teen mother said:

He’s really young, but he has done so much in his life. He also dropped out of school [like I did], but went on to college. He is a good role model. He is funny and nice. I look at him and see that even though I dropped out of high school and have a child, it doesn’t mean my life is over.

In addition to project staff, selected branch staff also earned praise from teens who had worked with them for enough time to develop personal relationships. Indeed, in addition to the rewards that come from working with young children, the personal connection between youth and their supervisor seemed to have a tremendous impact on youth attachment to some of the homework help and library/computer assistance programs. In contrast, there seemed to be less opportunity to develop personal relationships with staff in less-regular jobs and volunteer activities. Teens involved in these activities were less likely to report having the experience of supportive adults, and they seemed to have less commitment to their program activities. Staff turnover also can affect the relationship youth have with their supervisor. One of the King

¹⁴ Maintaining a balance between being friendly but not too friendly was an ongoing struggle for adults—PLPYD program coordinators and library staff alike. One coordinator told us she had to continually remind herself and branch staff that she and they were not mothers but bosses. Branch managers who had known teens informally as general library users found it difficult to assume a supervisory relationship with them.

County youth, noting the staff turnover, said: “The whole roster has pretty much changed since I’ve been here.” However, he said despite the turnover, all of the staff had been very nice to him. Although disciplinary issues seemed to have occurred rarely, staff handled them in a supportive manner aimed at teaching and retaining youth rather than penalizing them.

Opportunities for Initiative and Decision-Making

Some program types seemed to be more appropriate contexts for developing initiative. For example, there was greater opportunity for initiative and decision-making when teens were responsible for, or assisted in, choosing furnishings for new teen space, selecting materials for a teen summer reading program, or developing workshops for a youth summit than when they were responsible for signing up people to use computers or checking in returned books with the library’s computer circulation system. In addition, staff varied widely in how much responsibility they gave teens, which was influenced both by their knowledge of individual teens and their own comfort level. Teens assisting library staff with various duties often said they would like to be able to check out books to patrons, but library staff rarely permitted them to do so because of concerns about teens seeing patron records or having access to adult materials.

Several issues in the homework help programs had a bearing on how much responsibility teen employees could be given. One was that teen schedules did not always fit the needs of the library program, and youth employees often arrived after the start of a program. As a result, adult program staff sometimes were required to do work with children that could have been done by teens had they been there. Differing emphases in program activities, for example, the emphasis on academics vs. other activities such as games and crafts—and whether children had to finish homework before they used the computer or did other activities—also affected youth roles and assignments. Some adult leaders, especially those with an educational background, preferred to help children with their homework and assigned teens tasks such as helping children use the computers and playing games. In addition, policies on how long children could use computers and whether they had to finish their homework first sometimes affected the quality of youth interactions with younger children.

“One thing I’ve learned is to back off. Even if they failed in something or if they didn’t do something right to just use it as a learning tool because they’re macho kids, but at the same time I can tell when they’re afraid of things. They’re afraid of things and they won’t admit and so I urge and push them to it. Sometimes, they get perturbed, but then afterwards I can tell that they’re relieved and happy that they were able to do it.”

~PLPYD program leader

Over time, youth’s opportunities for initiative and decision-making generally grew, as staff became more aware of their capabilities. A branch librarian supervising a teen in a computer assistance program admitted it was hard to give him tasks because she was “a bit of a perfectionist [who likes] overseeing every step of every project.” However, she believed she was becoming more trusting and “getting better at delegating.” When she found out he was dissatisfied with his job because he expected it to be more technology-based than book-based, she gave him responsibility for selecting teen videos for the library to purchase and labeling them so they could be checked out. She recalled:

When I went to purchase videos I brought him along to help me evaluate and select. I don’t think I bought anything different than I would have without him but he felt a part of it. And he has more ownership. I try to give him more of the technology stuff when the opportunity comes up.

Now that he's not in school for the summer, I'm going to have him come in earlier on Thursdays and help the technician clean the inside of the equipment once a week. So he can really learn how it's set up and she can teach him a little bit more each week.

A project coordinator reported that to help focus her 13- to 15-year-old teens working in small groups, she gave them some structure and time limits within which to work. At the same time, to motivate and engage them, she frequently asked their opinions. In our observation of the program, the teens were not afraid to tell her what they thought. When working on a program on hip-hop poetry, she pretended that she did not know much about rap, so they could be the experts. In choosing areas of responsibility for running the program, she allowed a boy to choose to work on "hospitality" even though she would have preferred that he help with the computers, which was something he was good at. She explained: "You have to let them tell you no sometimes. It makes a big difference when they tell you what they want. They're going to do their best."

Nearly all of the youth interviewed felt they were asked for their ideas at work and that their opinions were considered when decisions were made. They reported feeling valued and respected when staff asked for, listened to, and implemented their ideas. Some youth expressed surprise at how much their opinions were valued. One Oakland youth said she thought it was "weird" because this was the first job in which her supervisor asked for her opinions and ideas. She added:

That makes me feel good. She wants to know what I'm thinking. She wants to know my input. And this just hasn't happened before. Somebody wants to really know how I feel. And just really listens. Not asking just to be asking because it seems appropriate. Just really listens to what I'm saying.

Teens who were interviewed over a 2-year period seemed more aware that the library staff listened to their ideas in the second year of the program than in the first year. This suggests it took time for staff to recognize the value of asking youth their opinions. It also likely took time for teens to feel comfortable giving their opinions and to see this as part of their role—especially, perhaps, for low-income youth not accustomed to being asked or giving their opinion or having experiences in which their opinions and ideas count. For example, two youth in computer assistance programs said they were uneasy when asked for their opinions and ideas. One explained he would not feel comfortable telling the library staff he thought something they designed, such as a program, was a bad idea. The other said she is sometimes asked for opinions and ideas but never gives them because she does not want other youth to disagree with her.

In another example, we observed staff on the first day of a week-long technology training with middle-school-aged youth having difficulty breaking up groups of youth who knew each other from school to facilitate team-building activities among the large group. When teens were asked to brainstorm rules for the training experience, they were reticent about participating. The adult leaders later reported that these teens seemed more challenged than other groups in their ability to reflect on peer issues or to risk stepping out of line as

"What was interesting about this group was when we started to talk about issues and their community and their lives, they had a very hard time ... I don't know exactly why So we had to work with them a lot to start talking about issues and some of the bigger social issues. It might have also been their age [9th grade]. There were certain things that could get to them. A lot of it had to do with popularity. There was a way they could look at those issues like peer pressure critically and start to focus on that. So that's when they came up with their own ideas.
~PLPYD consultant for youth media project

individuals to lead. However, the adult leader might have been too broad in her presentation, simply asking, “What rules should we follow in what we do?” instead of trying another approach to engage the teens such as breaking them into smaller groups for a discussion or asking a narrower question.

Finally, a consultant hired by the Baltimore project to develop and produce a public service announcement for television about issues of importance to teens similarly discovered that it was very difficult to get low-income teens to be critical of their circumstances. Because she was working with a small group of five teens over a 2-month period, and was basing her work on what was of concern to them—as opposed to an adult-planned training—she had more time to develop a rapport with them regarding their concerns about peer relationships. In brief, there undoubtedly were a host of factors that influenced the opportunity for initiative and decision-making in the PLPYD youth programs. Some involved program structures and staff, and some had to do with the characteristics of adolescents, including their discomfort in expressing their opinions around peers they might not know well.

The Quality of Activities

A sizable majority of youth we interviewed or surveyed said they enjoyed their jobs at the library and valued their training experiences. Our observations of training sessions conducted by project coordinators, other library staff, and outside specialists suggested that the quality of these experiences was generally high. Instructors not only knew their subject matter, they also for the most part knew how to make it interesting and engaging to youth with “hands-on” activities. A highlight of technology training at two sites, for instance, was learning how to take a computer apart and put it back together. Exemplary instructors were able to break tasks down into manageable pieces and also to convey the value of what teens were learning for other areas of their lives. For example, Computer Aides in Tucson reported that not only did their instructor help to develop their computer skills and a better understanding of their job, but he also helped them understand that they could use their library experience in multiple ways, one of which was as the starting point for a career in technology.

Interesting activities and authentic work. Beyond relationships with adult staff, specific types of activities were more engaging and interesting than others. Youth who helped children with homework and other after-school activities, operated and managed a copy center, translated stories for a Spanish Dial-A-Story service, performed in a storytelling program, or participated in advisory groups particularly expressed how much they liked their job at the library and their hope to continue it in the future. Interestingly, teens sometimes mentioned enjoying the challenge of their jobs—particularly a job that involved working with young children—but more often used the word “fun” to describe their work.

“There are bad days [when I’m helping kids with homework]. I want to just scream and pull my hair out and there are also days I don’t want to leave because I’m having so much fun ... it’s more fun than it is work. It’s not even really a job. It’s fun.”
~17-year-old girl

Indeed, a number of youth reported that they liked their library jobs and activities because they were not too difficult, suggesting that their tasks were appropriately “challenging but not too much of a reach” (Cambourne, 2002), p. 760). For instance, a teen describing her job operating machines in a library-based copy and design center said: “It’s not challenging, but I

like to do it.” Another youth employee in the copy and design center said his job gives him enough responsibility, but not more than he can handle. A Fort Bend youth said her job providing computer help and other activities in a community center is “much easier” than being on the drill team.

Programs that engaged teens in assisting staff with computer use and other library tasks seemed to vary more in their appeal, depending on the amount and variety of work to do and

“I'm a real challenge kind of person. I want to see if it's something I have to think about or something that's going to make me try harder, it pulls me through it. The thought of just having to do things like there may be kids that have difficulty learning as fast as others, I can sit there and give them all my attention. And the feeling like they depend on me it's so great. Like I'm just one big part of their life for two hours.”

~15-year-old girl

their relationship with the branch staff. Computer aides seemed to like their interactions with patrons who needed help with computers (and were not adverse to receiving help from a teenager), enjoyed checking in returned books using the libraries' electronic circulation system, and when permitted, checking out books. They also did not mind arts and crafts activities, such as preparing materials for children's programs, or designing bookmarks, flyers, and posters. However, most of the teens—especially older youth—typically did not like shelving books, if they had to do it too often.

In addition, teens employed as computer/library assistants sometimes complained about not having enough to do. According to a 16-year-old boy: “Sometimes being in here is boring because there's nothing to do sometimes. Like there's barely anything to do on Wednesday. No one's here. I do what there is to do and then I'm like, ‘What now—there's nothing for me to do.’ And when there is stuff for me to do, it's boring.” Another youth at another branch in the same program said he needed more things to do. Sometimes he will walk around the library and straighten up things because there is nothing else to do. He felt that he was capable of more challenging tasks than the staff were willing to give him.

It seems like every time I get here they [the library staff] have a lot of stuff for me to do because they don't want to do it. And I can do just everything that they can do and so they can do whatever they want to do and tell me to do what they don't want to do. I guess I would do the same thing . . . [But] I wish I could like answer the phone because I don't get to do that and I wish I could help the people at the front desk. A lot of times they need help up there and they still don't let us help.”

The views of the two youth above contrasted with those of the adult staff in that program, who believed the program was providing activities and tasks well matched to the developmental levels of their teens. For example, the program coordinator stated: “Teens just want to be given a chance. If you give them a challenge, they are more up for the challenge than adults realize. [And] they are capable.” A young adult librarian supervising teens in the program expressed the belief that the program provided youth with an unusual opportunity for meaningful work. In her words:

About the best thing you can do for kids is to give them some responsibility and make them feel appreciated. They need to work, and they don't really get that from school. They can if they are doing some extracurricular things, but usually they don't have real jobs that mean something. Or, they have jobs that mean a paycheck but don't bring anything else with it.

Thus, a minor theme that emerged from interviews with youth in computer assistance programs was that some did not view their job at the library as a “real” job. Some older teens were frustrated they could not check out books to patrons or assume more complex responsibilities. Some wanted to work more hours than allowed by their library program. Youth sometimes told us they needed “real” jobs that would give them more hours and more pay, or, in the case of younger teens, said when they turn 16 years old, they were going to get a job at places such as a movie theater or a fast food establishment. Another factor might have been youths’ awareness that their positions were grant-funded. As one explained, his work as a computer assistant was “more of a program than a real job,” but after the grant ended, it might become a “real position.”

In brief, two presumed benefits of the library employment programs was that they provided a job that was open to youth younger than 16, and they provided more extensive support and training in job and “life” skills than usually found in typical teen jobs. However, these positive aspects might have contributed to the feelings among some teens that their jobs were not authentic. Youth, because of their age and lack of experience in the work world, might view a job more as something that one *does*, rather than something from which one learns a variety of things beyond what is needed for the tasks of a job. It is not clear whether these perceptions among participants did or could pose problems for recruitment and retention. However, they reveal the difficulty of engaging teens in authentic tasks that fit both the developmental levels of youth and the services needed by the library.

Appropriate structure and responsibility. As indicated in earlier sections, adult leaders and supervisors often found it a challenge to structure the PLPYD programs and jobs at a level that was appropriate for youth. It took time for staff to get to know individual teens and trust them, and time for them to feel comfortable giving them responsibility. At the same time, they often presumed—as did many of the youth themselves—that their youth employees understood their responsibilities and would ask for help if they needed it. (Perhaps they also feared that too many rules and regulations at the beginning would cause resentment.) This was not always the case. As Larson et al. (in press) point out, youth have “limited skills for developing and executing plans” (p. 7). Staff had to learn to be clear in establishing rules and expectations, break tasks into manageable steps, explain changes in programs and jobs when they arose, and, in general, communicate frequently with their youth.

For example, one site implemented a library advocacy program, in which teens were paid to make public presentations about the library to youth in schools and other organizations. They received a 3-hour training session to help prepare their presentations and then were responsible for scheduling their own appointments. Although the parameters of the program and the presentations were clear to youth, some expressed uncertainty about their public-speaking abilities—one training session did not seem adequate preparation for some of the participants—and found it difficult to make their own appointments. They liked the adult staff, but they apparently did not feel comfortable initiating contact with them. Over time, adult staff established more regular means of communicating with the teens. They also encouraged teens to do some of their first presentations with a peer. Youth who remained with the program, in turn, began to take more initiative in scheduling appointments and showed more confidence in their public-speaking skills.

Although it took time, most of the program leaders and supervisors in PLPYD learned how to provide both structure and flexibility in their relationships with teens. They learned to provide structure and guidance in activities yet were not so restrictive that youth could not be creative, take initiative, and make decisions. Nor were they so laissez-faire that youth floundered when asked to make decisions or take responsibility for an activity or task. Some exemplary adult leaders seemed to know, based on their sense of individual teens' skills and capabilities, when to step in and when to step back.

The supervisor of teens employed at a branch-based copy and design center explained that some teens needed more supervision than others. Some he had no concern about leaving in the office by themselves because they normally stayed busy and on task. Some youth, furthermore, could be counted on to supervise peers as well. Others, however, had “a tendency to play” if they were not supervised or given a specific checklist of tasks to perform. To make it fair, he usually prepared a “to do” list for each day. This list described exactly what needed to get done and why. He explained: “I do that so they understand the significance of it and that there's a lot of responsibility attached to tasks that they've been assigned.”

He further reported that all of the procedures used in the copy and design center had evolved, often in response to requests and suggestions by the teens themselves. Teens were allowed some flexibility in their hours, and experienced teens could, moreover, schedule their own work hours to accommodate transportation availability and other activities.

They really make good suggestions. Like the work schedule and the need for [flexibility] because of extracurricular involvement. They initiated all of that It's amazing how much they're aware of certain things that they really guide me. I think the biggest contribution I've made is to teach them how to think more practically and more efficiently. But they come up with the ideas because they want to be perceived to be knowledgeable and they want to be comfortable themselves.

Opportunities to explore identity and career options. Several program staff believed that an important aspect of their work with teens was to help them become more aware of opportunities beyond the PLPYD Initiative—and that their PLPYD activities were connected to their future endeavors. At one site, a technology trainer working with youth in a computer assistance program explained:

We make this job a step. We say, ‘I would be happy if all of you weren't here next year because you got better jobs or decided to go to college or you're pursuing your dreams.’ We really pushed it on them that this is just a starting point, and there's a lot out there. Kids respond really well to that, because they know that they aren't done at 18, there's more. One important part is to draw the corollary between more learning, or the learning mindset, and a better job and expanding possibilities.

At another site, teens, as part of their training and work experiences in the library, participated in career and personality assessments to help identify three areas they might be interested in. Internships then were developed with community organizations and businesses—including a dance troupe, a community oral history project, and medical personnel—in order to “show them there's life outside of the [library program], and [they can go] beyond that.” The program leader stated that these internships were an opportunity to expose teens to jobs and

careers that they had not thought of before and ones that might be more realistic for them. He said:

I really try not to discourage them from thinking a certain way about what they want to be, but [what] I want them to do is get the exposure and then they make the decisions. The exposure makes them be more realistic about what they really want to do. And that allows me to find out what their motives are. The reason why one wanted to be a chiropractor was because his mom had back problems from a car accident. That's good motivation but he has to learn more about the technical aspect and what is demanded of him educationally.

Connections to family and community. Scattered throughout a number of PLYD programs were specific opportunities for teens to learn about, serve, or connect to their families and communities. Teens in King County, for example, were required to provide volunteer hours to the community as part of their training and developed their own projects (e.g., picking up litter around a branch library). Youth in Brooklyn developed a video documentary about their community and spent a day visiting the state legislature to learn more about library funding; Baltimore teens helped to develop a video documentary about the history of their community and televised public service announcements about teen issues.

The nature of the Spanish Dial-A-Story and Storytelling-To-Go programs also provided services and products—story-telling performances and recorded stories for children in Spanish—to their communities. Moreover, some youth involved in these activities reported that their parents helped them memorize lines or translate stories, and provided transportation. Teens in Charlotte celebrated at their graduation from the Teens Succeed! training program with their families or shared products such as a presentation on hip-hop poetry and a newsletter with family and friends. A senior library administrator who attended the first-year by Teen Succeed! graduation ceremony in Charlotte reported: “The kids were really appreciated and they all had to give a few second talk, but the joy in the people who saw these kids accomplish something, that was what really got me.”

Youth Factors

Reasons for Becoming Involved

A majority of youth, when discussing why they wanted to work at the library, cited reasons such as liking to help people, wanting to meet new people, learning computer skills, and, in some cases, because the job would look good on a resume. Opportunities to travel and to “just have something to do” were other reasons cited for becoming involved in PLYD. Younger teens occasionally mentioned that the library was one of the few places they could work for pay at the age of 14. A few of the youth in Washoe County and Philadelphia said they applied for the job because they thought working for the county would be “cool.” (“Working for the county” may sound more impressive to some youth than

“It’s a lot of fun [to volunteer here] because I get to know the librarians more, and I’m starting to recognize people who are regulars.... I just love reading so it’s a place to volunteer Every time I come here, I learn so much more. My mom is proud and my dad is like, ‘Oh, that’s great. I would never have thought of doing something like that when I was your age.’ My dad says stuff like that.”

~15-year-old girl

working in fast food or retail.) Among those who said money was a factor in their initial decision to work at the library, most reported that after they began their work, their main motivation to continue was to help others or learn new skills.

Not surprisingly, reasons for participating in PLPYD activities varied by program type to some extent. For example, PASS! Mentors in Oakland and Teen Leadership Assistants in Philadelphia's LEAP program often mentioned that they liked to work with children and wanted to learn teaching skills. A majority of the youth involved in computer assistance programs (Fort Bend County, King County, Tucson, and Washoe County) or other activities involving the use of computer and other technology (in Brooklyn and Baltimore, teens had experience with video production, and in Charlotte, teens learned to operate copy and design machinery) often wanted to learn more about computers, although, again, a few said they were interested in the job because they liked helping people.

Despite their apparent desire to be of service and to participate in activities that would have an impact on their future development, many youth participants acknowledged that they did not know what they were getting into. For example, a majority of LEAP youth, youth in the Washoe County Youth Adult Partnership, and Tucson Teen Advocates reported they did not have an accurate picture of their job before they started working at the library—even those who had prior connections with the library—or did not fully grasp the requirements of their positions. This might suggest that these youth really wanted or needed a job, felt comfortable with the library, and did not care what type of work they would be doing.

Reasons for Leaving

Data collected over a 2-year period ending in June 2002 indicated that 472 (64%) of the 737 youth who participated in PLPYD programs stayed until the end. In some cases, this meant completing a particular project such as a video documentary, finishing a set number of community service hours, or making five required presentations for the library to earn a stipend; in other cases, it meant staying in a job for a year or until graduating from high school.

The remaining 265 (36%) participants left their projects early. In half of these instances, staff did not know the reason youth left. They often stated that teens stopped coming, and they had been unable to reach them by phone or through a friend. Among the reasons that were reported as shown in Table 12, unexplained “attendance issues” occurred most frequently. Additional reasons were conflicts with extracurricular activities or school assignments, moving out of the community, lack of interest in specific activities, behavioral issues (e.g., petty theft of program supplies or conflicts with peers), and transportation problems. Several of the Charlotte youth were not able to continue their work at the library because they failed to meet the minimum GPA requirement, although some were reinstated after they improved their grades. In a small number of cases, youth left because of the need to earn more money at a different job.

Table 12. Reasons for Terminating PLPYD Activities*

	Frequency
Attendance issues/problems**	51
“Lack of interest” in activity; program “too much work”	15
Family moved out of area	14
Other extracurricular activities (sports, dance, etc.)	12
Academic or school issues; youth did not maintain GPA	10
Behavioral problems, violations of library policies	10
Transportation problems	6
Another job	4
Medical; pregnancy	3
Parents removed youth as punishment	2
Family problems	2
Not specified or not reported	133

* As reported by project staff for 265 youth.

**Attendance problems might overlap with other reasons.

One site, Washoe County, experienced significantly higher levels of youth turnover—especially in its Spanish Dial-A-Story and Storytelling-To-Go Action Teams—than did the other libraries. Conversations with program staff suggest that the activities were more demanding and associated expectations for youth in this program were higher and more complex than in the other PLPYD employment models. The programs included ambitious, specific training commitments from youth, and required youth to collaborate with adults and peers in activities that were fairly independent of normal branch library functions. Most involuntary terminations at this site involved repeated inability to attend meetings (sometimes because of transportation issues) or to follow through with commitments. In a few cases, youth did not understand the goals or expectations of their program; for example, youth who signed on for the Story-Telling-To-Go Action Team thought they would be reading to children rather than performing stories.

Attendance issues were particularly challenging at several sites where staff often commented on the transience of low-income teens. One young adult librarian reported: “Our experience has been they’re not here very long before they move on.” Staff worked hard to accommodate teens’ schedules and transportation difficulties to keep them engaged in the PLPYD programs and jobs. However, their struggles in supervising and working with some of the more challenging teens who were assigned to their branches were exacerbated by high rates of youth turnover.

Constraints on Participation

PLPYD youth participants varied widely but seemed to share a belief that PLPYD was not only an opportunity for their own development but also a chance to serve others. Undoubtedly, these characteristics as well as the support of family and friends encouraged them to become involved. There were other personal factors, however, that worked to constrain participation among some

youth. Although these factors did not characterize the majority of the youth who became involved in PLYD, they did create challenges for some. They also might indicate challenges that other youth—that is, those who did *not* become involved—would have had to overcome in order to participate.

Competing interests. A number of youth faced difficult choices between devoting time to an athletic or other extracurricular activity, or participating in a PLYD program. This was more common among older youth. For example, a female high school student who had been one of the leaders of a youth advisory group discussed the pressure she felt to devote full-time attention to softball, which could eventually provide a college scholarship. Another high school student said she had to choose between two volunteer jobs, one at the library and one at a veterinarian’s office, and because she liked animals she had decided on the latter. Some teens moving from middle school to high school anticipated that high school would not allow them enough time to be involved in the library or said they wanted to “branch out” and try other activities such as drama or sports that they could not do in middle school.

For a small number of youth, a real or perceived need to earn more money was another reason to consider leaving a PLYD job. These tended to be older youth who said they were searching for another job that would provide more hours and income because they were responsible for their personal expenses (and, occasionally, living expenses) or saving to buy a first car.

Academic pressures. Many of the youth we interviewed were competent students— or believed that participating in PLYD activities was helping them with schoolwork. However, several reported that pressure to spend more time on homework and improve grades also had led them to consider quitting the program. In some cases, notably in Charlotte, project staff made decisions to terminate youth who did not fulfill grade requirements—although they were welcomed back if they brought their grades up. As noted earlier, youth interviewed in 2001 and 2002 reported having less time for PLYD in the second year. Some high school seniors often felt that it was difficult to maintain their involvement in PLYD while coping with college and financial aid applications.

Lack of support. Nearly all of the teens we interviewed mentioned their families as an important source of support and encouragement that made it possible for them to be involved in PLYD activities. Teens reported that parents and other family members viewed the library as a good place to work because teens were learning new skills, staying out of trouble, were not working at a manual labor job, were helping people, or were earning money. Friends also were cited as encouraging. Some of these youth said some of their friends initially thought it was weird they were working at the library, but with time, their friends ended up thinking their job was “cool” and wanted to work at the library, too.

“Before my mom got her new car, I would have to take the bus home and wouldn’t get home until 9 o’clock Three hours on the bus was not making my dad too happy. But I wanted to keep the job so I kept on going. My mom loved it, she thought it was a good start and good for resumes, which it is.”

~13-year-old boy

However, in a few instances, youth had extensive home responsibilities for child care and household chores, as in the case of a 16-year-old boy who told us: “My family doesn’t really care. It’s just a job. Sometimes it interferes with something—my sister has a baby, and I usually

watch her after school Tuesdays, Thursday and Friday. So I have to work longer hours to help out.” In a few cases, changes in family finances or a move to another community meant a teen had to leave the program. Or, a change in a parent’s work hours sometimes meant that he or she could or longer provide transportation to the library.

Transportation barriers. Teens preferred to attend activities or work at jobs located in their own communities. Particularly in county library systems and urban areas with inadequate public transportation systems, the main challenge was arranging transportation for youths without cars. Although parents and other relatives were often committed to helping overcome this problem, they were not always available to consistently provide transportation necessary for some teens to keep up with training schedules or job duties. In a few cases, parents were reluctant to allow their child to use public transportation in the evening in neighborhoods viewed as unsafe.

With one exception, getting to and from the library was more difficult for youth participants in county (Fort Bend, King, and Washoe County) and city-county (Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Tucson-Pima County) library systems than in large urban systems (Baltimore, Brooklyn, Oakland, and Philadelphia). Transportation was an issue for teens involved in programs or jobs with more extensive training and work hours—homework help and library/computer assistance programs—or ones not located in their neighborhood. For example, youth advisory groups often met at the main library, which was often some distance from where teens lived.

Project staff in urban systems tried to place youth in branch libraries close to their homes or close to bus lines and, in Baltimore, provided bus tokens for teens who had to use public transportation. Oakland reported difficulty retaining PASS! mentors who were not able to work in branches close to their homes. One Oakland youth took the initiative to arrange with a teacher to leave school early on the days she worked so she could get to the library by 3:30 p.m. It took her 15 minutes to walk to the library from school but an hour on the bus to get home.

County libraries usually had poor or nonexistent public transportation systems; Charlotte was further complicated because school busing meant teens usually did not attend school in their own neighborhood. In most instances, teens depended on family and friends to drive them to their jobs, which sometimes meant arriving at work several hours early because that was when they could get a ride. Youth reported making special arrangements to have school buses drop them off at the library, or for the few who had their own cars, having to drive 30 to 40 minutes each way to and from the library. Several youth in Fort Bend County told us that friends who wanted to be Tech Teens could not participate because they lived too far from the library or community center where the program was located. An exception was King County where teens typically lived close to the library where they worked. They walked, rode their bikes, or had a parent who supplied transportation.

Lessons and Implications

In summary, youth found their way to PLPYD programs and jobs through a variety of routes. Their decisions to become involved with their public libraries—and how long they stayed—were

influenced by several factors. These factors included the quality of relationships and activities in programs as well as the content, attendance requirements, financial incentives, and selection criteria for programs and jobs. Other factors were teens' own interests, their involvement in other extracurricular activities, and level of family support. Although most of the PLPYD youth were able to make arrangements to get to their jobs, transportation was clearly a significant barrier for some. It was also one that project and library staff tried to address, for example, by planning activities for times when teens could attend, scheduling them close to where teens lived, or providing bus tokens for use of public transportation.

Our findings suggest several lessons with regard to participation in library youth programs:

- ***Recruiting youth through community organizations expands the potential range of participants but requires clear communication about program goals and expectations.*** There were trade-offs to using outside organizations to recruit youth for library jobs and programs. Schools, youth organizations, youth employment programs, and, occasionally, city or county juvenile justice departments brought in more “hard-to-reach” teens and teens who did not normally use the library. However, the varied priorities and goals of outside organizations influenced which teens were identified for jobs, and they did not always fit well in the library environment. Successful referrals from outside agencies depended on clear communication between the library and the agency about the program expectations and the capacity of the library to work with more difficult teens.
- ***Tangible rewards increase engagement and retention in library youth programs.*** Despite the fact that more youth said that they would stay involved in their library activities if they were not paid—indicating that they were receiving benefits that went beyond their paychecks—the opportunity to earn money was a strong draw of PLPYD jobs. The chance to earn community service credits for school was another incentive in Baltimore. We might further speculate that it was one way to encourage youth to attend training that was more beneficial for their personal and social development than directly applicable to their jobs, training that they might not have chosen to attend otherwise.
- ***Youth participation requires both structure and flexibility on the part of adult leaders.*** Project and library staff across the nine sites worked to build relationships with, and hold on to, their youth participants. Youth, in turn, felt the PLPYD project staff and librarians were fair in their expectations and willing to accommodate their schedules. Indeed, flexibility on the part of project and library staff emerged as an important factor in retaining youth in PLPYD jobs and programs. However, this flexibility came at some cost to library staff. Libraries implementing homework help and computer assistance programs needed teens when they were busiest, that is, during the after-school and evening hours. Because of transportation difficulties and other activities, teens were not always available at the times they were most needed. On the other hand, less frequent programs such as youth advisory groups suffered from a lack of structure and engaging activities.

Chapter 4

STAFFING AND ORGANIZATION

The implementation process highlighted three challenges related to staffing in all of the sites. These included (1) hiring appropriate program staff and placing them in a well-supported organizational position, (2) developing a commitment to the new youth programs among front-line library staff, and (3) providing high-quality staff training. As a general rule, library systems that met each of these challenges developed stronger, more sustainable programs than those that did not. Several particular, contextual factors made these goals significantly less difficult to achieve. These included having an executive director who was strongly supportive of youth programming, an institutional culture that valued flexibility and innovation, a high-level administrator for youth services capable of integrating the Initiative into the larger institution, and a relatively low degree of staff turnover, particularly among those who were most important to the PLPYD programs.

Program Staff

All of the PLPYD sites had one or more individuals whose jobs were exclusively or primarily devoted to administering the Initiative. Having dedicated program staff made sense because of the size of the grant and the ambitious goals that it represented. Although library systems that are not operating similarly large and/or well-funded youth programs will not generally be able to afford such staff, many of the issues involved in establishing strong staffing for youth programs apply to smaller programs that involve library staff who work in other capacities as well. Further, these lessons should be helpful to library systems interested in developing more expansive youth programming, or in strengthening the programs they already have.

Table 13. The PLPYD Initiative: Staffing

SITE	Staffing
Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore, MD)	The PLPYD Project Coordinator was a youth professional from outside the library, and the library's Director of School and Student Services served as Project Director. College work-study students as well as a manager or young adult librarian at each branch also worked with youth.
Brooklyn Public Library (Brooklyn, NY)	The PLPYD program was coordinated by a former young adult librarian and the Manager of Young Adult Services. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising youth.
Public Library of Charlotte/Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC)	Two program sites were coordinated by two youth development professionals with teaching experience. Other staff included the Youth Services Director, branch managers, and branch librarians.
Fort Bend County Library (Richmond, TX)	The project was coordinated and directed by library staff, including the Coordinator of Youth Services and a library assistant in adult services. Community partners and branch staff provided additional support in supervising youth.
King County Library System (Issaquah, WA)	The project was coordinated by a professional in the field of youth employment and development and directed by the library's Associate Director for Public Services. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising youth.
Oakland Public Library (Oakland, CA)	PASS! was staffed by a program coordinator and part-time site coordinators, who worked with teen mentors at each of the PASS! locations. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising the teens.
Free Library of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA)	PLPYD project manager with expertise in education and technology was hired from outside the library. Other project staff included the Director of the Office of Public Support Services, the Program Development Coordinator, branch managers, and LEAP adult program leaders.
Tucson Pima Public Library (Tucson, AZ)	A senior young adult librarian became the full-time PLPYD Project Director, assisted on a part-time basis by another young adult librarian. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising youth.
Washoe County Library System (Reno, NV)	A PLPYD Project Director was hired from outside the library along with several consultants from the community, including a high school computer science teacher, a youth development professional, a professional storyteller, a director of a family support organization, and recording studio professionals. Branch staff provided minor support in supervising youth.

Among the PLPYD sites, two issues were particularly important with regard to program staff. These included hiring individuals who came from outside the library profession, and connecting program staff to both high-level managerial staff and front-line branch staff.

Hiring Non-Library Professionals

As detailed in Table 13, five of the nine PLPYD sites hired program directors and/or other key program staff who did not have previous library experience to run their PLPYD youth programs. Interview data indicate that these decisions to hire non-library professionals were made for two reasons. First, there is a nationwide shortage of library professionals in general, and young adult librarians in particular. One high-level administrator in Oakland explained:

We're seeing that folks my age and a little older who have been in the profession for 25-30 years are retiring, and a lot of people aren't going into library work. It's not only turnover but real staff shortages, especially in youth services. . . . We're really finding it hard to recruit teen specialists who are librarians.

It was, she added, particularly difficult to hire people of color.

At the same time, several of the PLPYD libraries believed that professionals who had experience relevant to their particular program could contribute useful expertise, both to the PLPYD Initiative and the library system more broadly. For example, one site chose to hire someone who had previously worked in the area of youth employment and job readiness training to administer their computer assistance program, which was similarly focused on youth employment and training.

The experience of the PLPYD sites suggests that hiring non-library professionals to manage youth programs poses both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, considering such individuals expands the pool of potential employees, and can bring useful expertise into the library system. However, it also is often difficult to integrate non-library professionals into the larger library system.

In some cases, front-line branch staff were uncomfortable with the decision to hire a non-library professional to run an important program that might have a significant impact on their everyday work duties. At one site, for example, both the PLPYD Program Director and other library administrative staff agreed that “there was real resistance” to hiring a library outsider, which took a year or so to overcome. In this case, however, staff were successfully won over and in fact came to view the new Program Director as an exceptionally valuable employee who was making an important contribution to the entire library.

If non-library professionals are hired to run important youth programs, it is critical that they have the time and support necessary to learn the fundamentals of the library system. In order to implement a program effectively, youth development professionals need to have a solid grasp of the culture, values, structure, and everyday operations of the larger institution with which they are working. If they do not, it is unlikely that they will be able to implement the program in a way that works well for other library staff and the institution as a whole. In

particular, there are more likely to be differences and misunderstandings with other library staff regarding how youth should be employed, supervised, and disciplined—particularly at the branch level, where the majority of youth programs take place.

A final consideration with regard to hiring non-library professionals is the potential difficulty that this may pose for systems with a unionized work force. As one executive director explained, hiring staff who do not have a library science degree to work with children or youth creates a lot of “union issues,” as the unions view this as a way of “watering down” the job qualifications of trained librarians. These issues are not insurmountable, however, as this library still chose to hire a PLPYD project manager who did not have a library background despite having to deal with union concerns. Overall, it appears that although having a unionized work force necessitates additional considerations when it comes to hiring non-library professionals (or, as will be discussed below, teen employees), it is not a decisive factor.

Connecting Youth Program Staff to Other Library Staff

Of course, hiring a library professional to direct a youth program is no guarantee that differences or misunderstandings with other staff will not arise. Regardless of their professional background, program staff need to have support from upper management and administration, and to develop good working relationships with other library staff in order to run a successful and sustainable program. If the youth program staff are overly isolated, they may not have the power needed to integrate their program into the larger institution, the information necessary to make good decisions, or the support needed to provide a developmentally rich experience for participating youth. At the same time, isolation deprives other staff of the opportunity to learn from the program and diminishes its impact on the larger culture of the institution with regard to youth relations.

Successful PLPYD youth programs were embedded in webs of relationships and supports that connected high-level administrators, youth program staff, branch staff, and youth themselves. This was particularly true for larger programs that involve several branches and have numerous adult staff that work or come into regular contact with participating youth. Because the quality of adult-youth relationships is such an important component of a youth development approach, it is necessary to build a program that facilitates the development of positive connections in a systematic way. Doing this is much easier if adults who are involved in the program feel supported and valued themselves. The library, in other words, must model the types of relationships that it is attempting to extend to youth within the context of its own staff relations and youth programs.

Engaging Library Staff

Another closely related issue that was particularly important in the PLPYD implementation process was developing “buy-in,” or commitment, among front-line library staff. If staff were not, on the whole, invested in and supportive of new or expanded youth programming, it had a negative impact on the quality, influence, and sustainability of the program. Cultivating staff commitment and support was particularly important at branch libraries, as all of the nine PLPYD Initiatives involved them to a greater or lesser extent. Enlisting the support of branch managers

was most crucial, because they have the power and authority to direct and influence the rest of their staff.

Investing in Time

The key to developing commitment was convincing front-line branch staff that the new or expanded programming was worth the investment of extra time it required. Across the nine sites, staff concerns about time pressures represented by far the most important reason they were not necessarily enthusiastic about their library's new PLPYD Initiative. Even staff who were committed to and enthusiastic about the idea of enhanced youth services worried that they would not be able to put in the necessary time without neglecting other important duties. This was a legitimate concern, as good youth programming does require additional time from staff, especially when new programs, program components, and/or youth participants are introduced. At the PLPYD sites, tasks such as attending additional trainings, coming up with workable teen job descriptions, and supervising youth all required substantial investments of staff time.

In sites where programs worked well, staff found that the time spent working with youth was worthwhile and a boost to their overall professional experience, and they came to strongly support and value the new or expanded programs. In several of the youth employment programs, this was to a significant extent due to the fact that the teen workers came to play very helpful roles within the library. With the more successful programs, however, the depth of branch staff support went deeper than such purely practical concerns. Most fundamentally, staff valued the new programs because they felt enriched by the experience of developing positive relationships with youth, and by seeing firsthand how teens grew in terms of their knowledge, maturity, and self-confidence.

In order to achieve this level of staff buy-in, the issue of staff time pressures must be carefully considered and addressed. Notably, evidence from the PLPYD sites suggests that the best way to do this is not by minimizing or eliminating staff involvement in youth programs. As noted earlier, if staff are not sufficiently involved, programs do not develop a broad base of support, and are therefore less likely to be sustainable. They have relatively little impact on the larger library culture, because staff are deprived of the opportunity to work directly with youth. According to one high-level administrator: "As long as you use outside consultants, even if staff have some involvement or know them, they're different. Staff feel that [and think] 'That doesn't affect me. That's something outside of me or the library.'"

There is the additional risk of missing the chance for the library's own staff to learn from and contribute to the youth program. Again, in the words of the administrator quoted above: "Taking people who are already working in the library system, who have a natural inclination and love working with youth, and who have a particular skill or talent that might be of interest to kids, could be an agent for change."

Staff buy-in to new or expanded youth programming can be developed in several interrelated ways. These include connecting programs to the larger library system, involving staff in program design and implementation processes, and establishing a good program management structure. In all cases, it is particularly important to win the allegiance of branch

managers whose sites will be affected by youth programs. As a program director explained: “If a branch manager is positive about something, it ‘trickles down’ to the other staff.”

Connecting Programs to the Larger System

The experience of the PASS! program in Oakland demonstrates the importance of having youth programs that are connected to the larger library system. PASS!, which had been established in 1994, was widely viewed as a successful program at the time of the PLPYD grant, operating in ten branches and serving an average of 250 children per day. (Each branch also typically employed three or four teens to mentor children.) A retreat convened in 2002 to review the program, however, revealed that staff were widely unhappy with it. Their primary complaint was that the PASS! program was too separated from the library system. There was a high level of staff alienation from the program—as well as resentment of it—because staff felt that they were being forced to accommodate an after-school program that had no real connection to their professional identities or to the library itself. In particular, staff were unhappy because they frequently did not have good working relationships with adult program leaders, were not involved in hiring or training teen mentors, and did not believe that participating children were developing any knowledge of the library and its resources.

The PASS! experience demonstrates that it is important for staff to be involved with youth programs even when pressed for time. Among the PLPYD sites, several means of involving staff stood out as particularly important. First, if a limited number of branches were involved in the program, it worked well to establish a competitive application process, so that branches that most wanted the program were able to get it. This way, programs were established in branches where staff were receptive and enthusiastic, which of course increased their level of commitment from the start. (Because the PLPYD grant was directed toward low-income youth in particular, only branches that served low-income communities were able to apply.)¹⁵

Second, it was important to involve staff in the planning stage of the new or expanded program. In particular, programs that made sure that staff understood their basic aims and structure from the outset, and that established open channels of communication for staff input, did much better than those that did not. A program director noted: “Giving people the freedom and voice to contribute makes a huge difference.”

Third, it was important to involve staff in the process of selecting youth workers. This was particularly critical in cases where youth were to be working closely with branch staff. Although it was more time-consuming for everyone involved to have staff participate in youth interviews and hiring decisions, doing so greatly increased their level of commitment to the program, as well as their tolerance for the various problems that would, over time, inevitably develop with some youth.

¹⁵ There were also variations of this basic arrangement. King County, for example, assigned the Techno Teen program to branches in its first year, but had a competitive application process the following year. Alternatively, Philadelphia, which already had the LEAP program in all of its branches at the time of the PLPYD grant, chose particular branches to work with under the PLPYD Initiative based on knowledge of which branches had staff who were committed to youth development goals.

Fourth, it was important for staff to play a role in developing and refining teen positions. Youth programs will not work well unless the roles that teens are playing in the library can over time become helpful to library staff. And, such roles are unlikely to develop without staff input. Even when teens are hired as library assistants, they initially create a significant amount of extra work for staff. For instance, youth generally require substantially greater supervision when first hired than do adults, because they need to learn the fundamentals of employee behavior, such as being on time and calling in when sick.

As noted above, establishing a new program or orienting a new youth worker will necessarily require an extra investment of staff time at the outset. With time, however, this should change. At one site implementing a computer assistance program, for example, a branch manager explained that although supervising a new employee initially took an hour of her time every day, eventually this was reduced to 5 to 10 minutes per day. At the same time, youth came to play a more and more useful role in terms of library operations. “Now that these guys are really up and running,” commented another branch manager: “they get a lot of stuff done. So it definitely alleviates our workload and helps with the general running of the library.”

It is important to emphasize the fact that developing teen roles that are helpful to library staff requires that there is not too much turnover among participating youth. It takes time for teens to learn how to work in the library, and for good relationships between youth and staff to develop. If teens are constantly cycling through the branch, staff continually have to train new people and never experience the benefits of having productive youth employees and/or positive youth relationships. Although the amount of time required for these benefits to develop will vary, as a general rule, teens who are supposed to play a helping role in the library should be in their positions for no less than 6 months. And, as the LEAP program at Philadelphia demonstrated, if a program is structured to allow teens to move up to more responsible positions, they might work productively with the same program for years.

Successful youth programs must also incorporate a good management structure that works well for branch staff. In particular, branch managers should feel that they have recourse if problems with particular teens or program elements arise. This requires establishing clear lines of supervision that branch staff are comfortable with, as well as open lines of communication with program staff. One structure that worked well was to give branch managers or young adult librarians day-to-day supervisory responsibilities for teens, and to have them call the program director if repeated problems with a youth worker arose. For this to work, however, the program director had to understand and respect the perspective of both the branch staff and the youth involved, so that she could work out a response to the situation that would be appropriate and beneficial to all concerned.

Finally, it is important that staff not be asked to manage too many youth programs at once. Several of the PLPYD sites developed problems because they attempted to start up too many new youth initiatives at the same time. Inevitably, staff would concentrate their energies on the one program most immediately important to them and neglect the others. Even when staff had the best intentions to support all of their library’s youth initiatives, time constraints made this impossible. As a general rule, it proved much better to focus on developing one or two initiatives in a systematic way, rather than trying to have too many balls in the air at once.

Staff Training

The experience of the nine PLPYD sites demonstrated that good staff training is an important part of successful youth programming. In order for training to work, however, it must be relevant to staff and respectful of their time constraints. Emphasizing a youth development approach can be very helpful if it encourages staff to relate to teens in new ways and addresses their practical concerns. Youth development principles may also prove counterproductive and confusing, however, if they are not carefully presented. The experience of some of the most successful sites indicates that training works best when it includes staff who perform a wide variety of duties within the library, including librarians, administrative staff, and security guards.

“Youth development training has helped me see that it’s the youth who lead us. We aren’t doing for them, we’re doing *with* them. [Training] allowed me to open up to letting go of some elements of control. Youth can do things really well, too.”

~Young adult librarian

Once again, the biggest barrier to creating staff enthusiasm for trainings across the nine sites was concern about time constraints. This was particularly true at the beginning of the grant period, when new programs and/or training regimes were being instituted. As one senior administrator explained: “The initial investment of training and orientation can seem overwhelming until the payoff is there.” A PLPYD program director at one site was able to alleviate staff concerns by providing them with approved time off, or “sub hours,” for training. In most cases, however, staff once again had to be convinced that the time required for training was worth the investment. Accomplishing this meant devising training that offered staff new insights while also responding to their everyday concerns.

“I came into it not knowing what they meant by youth development, and [the training] gave me a really clear picture. I wish that had happened first We knew before that what we were doing with teen volunteers was good, but we didn’t really know why. This gave me the reason why you do what you do.”

~YA Librarian and
PLPYD Program Director

When presented well, youth development principles proved capable of meeting these criteria. Across the nine sites, many staff commented that the basic principle of working *with* youth, rather than trying to provide services *for* them, represented an important new insight for them. “Training teens to work substantively in helping roles is radical for the library,” explained one young adult librarian. Before the PLPYD Initiative, youth “weren’t asked for their help and opinions.” Attempting to establish a “reciprocal” rather than a hierarchical relationship between staff and youth represented an approach that many staff across the nine sites found innovative and exciting.

In some cases, however, exposing staff to new youth development principles appeared to backfire and cause confusion. In Brooklyn, for example, a branch librarian working with the library’s “Teen Time” program commented that she understood her role as: “just sitting there and observing. I’m really not ‘there’ because I want them to feel that it’s their space.” Similarly, another branch staffer noted that she thought that the program simply offered youth “a space to eat, drink, and hang out.” “I feel like I should be offering them something more,” she continued, “I am not sure what that something is.”

In this and other cases, youth development principles appeared to be interpreted to mean that staff should relegate themselves to playing a highly passive role vis-à-vis youth, so that teens would have the opportunity to direct themselves without any sort of adult interference. Certainly, a good number of staff at some sites did not clearly understand what constituted an approved adult role in what was for them a newly touted youth development paradigm. This confusion over youth development issues led to problems for both staff and youth. In addition to feeling uncertain and to some degree disempowered, staff were in some cases resentful because they felt that they did not have the authority to discipline unruly teens. Such situations were also bad for youth, who were deprived of an opportunity to develop engaged relationships with adults that adhered to developmentally appropriate boundaries and expectations.

As Larson (2003) explains, adults in fact need to play an active role in structuring and directing good youth programs. Although strong programs should maximize youth's ability to exercise their own initiative, adult leaders need to be "active and intentional in creating the conditions" that allow this to happen. "Indeed," writes Larson, "we found that when adult leaders backed off and gave youth complete control, the youth's work could stall or become disorganized due to youth's inexperience, and this could then undermine their motivation and learning." Adults involved in youth programs must, in other words, tread a fine line between providing youth with the structure and direction that they need, while giving them the freedom to explore their own ideas, develop their own plans, and, in some cases, make their own mistakes. Being able to do this well is "more of an art than a science," which typically takes some time to develop.

In some sites, staff were dissatisfied because they felt that whatever training they received was irrelevant to their most pressing day-to-day concerns. One librarian working with a homework help program, for example, complained that she and her colleagues had "talked for months about wanting training about how to handle different discipline issues that come up with groups of children and teens" without the problem being addressed. Similarly, at another site, one branch manager was unhappy because she felt that she and her colleagues were unprepared to meet the challenges posed by having a large number of youth participants in their relatively small branch. "We couldn't have dreamed of some of the difficulties we've had with the behavior of [the PLYD] youth and other teens," she explained.

The most impressive training programs also involved a wide variety of library staff. A senior library administrator stated: "If I want positive youth development and mentoring to happen, I can't have guards acting like prison guards." Training at this site followed an integrated model that involved staff from different parts of the library in both the planning and presentation stages. For example, one training, "Electronic Resources for Children, Teens, and Families," was designed by staff from the information technology, public service, and development offices and presented to librarians, administrative staff, and guards as a group. This session provided information on software programs for children and youth, discussed how these programs contribute to their learning and development, and explained why children tend to use them in pairs or small groups, rather than individually. As one senior administrator recounted:

There's a lot of child development, adolescent development, and how technology relates to all of this . . . it is important that given principles of child development, your 4th and 5th graders tend to have two or three on a computer, because their need for social interaction is much higher than

their need to accomplish something on the computer. The discussions went into how renovations took place, how the computers were set up . . . that you had to have enough space, and the guards needed to know that if those kids were making noise, that was important for them.

Such an integrated and inclusive training format serves to build institutional knowledge regarding how to work well with children and youth in a particularly effective way.

Institutional Factors Affecting Implementation

The PLPYD experience also reminded us that any new youth initiative is implemented within a larger institutional context that affects it in critical ways, which are often beyond its ability to control. Several factors were particularly important with regard to staffing and staff development in the implementation of the PLPYD Initiative. These included having (1) an executive director who was strongly supportive of the new or expanded programming facilitated by the PLPYD grant, (2) an institutional culture that valued and encouraged flexibility and innovation, (3) a high level administrator for youth services capable of integrating the new initiative into the larger institution, and (4) a relatively low degree of staff turnover, particularly among those most involved in the PLPYD programs. As a general rule, the more of these conditions that were present, the easier it was to implement the Initiative.

Institutional Leadership

The importance of a strong executive director who actively supports youth programming was most dramatically illustrated by the experience of the Oakland Public Library during the course of the 3-year grant. During the planning and initial implementation stages, Oakland had no permanent executive director. Despite the valiant efforts of the interim director, this lack of a strong, permanent institutional leader allowed the many structural problems of the pre-existing PASS! program to continue to fester unaddressed. Essentially, this rendered the new innovations attempted by the PLPYD grant ineffective. When a new executive director with a strong commitment to youth services was hired in 2001, however, critical reforms were quickly instituted, both for the PASS! program and the library as a whole.

In this case, the reforms that were needed were beyond the power of lower-level staff to accomplish without coordinated support and direction from the top. Even in less dramatic instances, however, it is important for youth programs to have the support of the executive director. Although this person will not be involved in day-to-day program operations, she is responsible for communicating the basic priorities of the library both to staff and the larger community. If a clear message is sent that the library is strongly committed to youth programming, it should be easier to leverage the support necessary to run a successful program, both within the institution and in the community at large.

Climate for Innovation

In general, library systems with an institutional culture that values flexibility and innovation had a significantly easier time implementing the PLPYD Initiative than those that do not.¹⁶ Across the nine sites, the way in which staff described the general institutional culture of their library was striking. Basically, what staff described fit three patterns: (1) libraries with a more “traditional” culture characterized by hierarchy and bureaucracy; (2) libraries that valued flexibility, innovation, and a flattening of traditional bureaucratic hierarchies; and (3) libraries that were attempting to shift from the first paradigm to the second. If the nine PLPYD sites are indicative of a larger trend, it appears that library systems are in the process of shifting from a more hierarchical to a more flexible management structure, and that this has a positive effect on the overall institutional culture that is particularly helpful for youth programming.

Tucson, for example, was remarkable for the degree of commitment and enthusiasm that front-line staff brought to the PLPYD programs, despite the fact that the library was reported to be under-funded, understaffed, and attempting to serve a growing population that is increasingly impoverished and diverse. Staff interviews indicated that this was because staff shared a sense of mission that made them value their work, and that they felt valued and empowered by the institution in return. They dated this sense of mission back to the early 1990s, when the then-executive director reinvigorated the library system by making it actively committed to outreach in general, and youth services in particular. Library staff involved in implementing the Initiative, for example, agreed that “the higher ups have never said ‘no’” to an innovative staff suggestion. They added: “They realize that staff have very good instincts about what works.” The fact that staff at all levels felt that they could contribute to building a library that prided itself on serving an underserved community made them receptive to and enthusiastic about the new possibilities for youth services facilitated by the PLPYD grant.

The experience of Fort Bend County similarly illustrates the fact that developing a commitment to youth services can in some cases work to energize the library system as a whole. Fort Bend staff were particularly receptive to and enthusiastic about the new exposure to youth development principles produced by the PLPYD grant. Staff interviews were notable for the extent to which staff discussed youth development, indicating that it represented a new and exciting set of ideas for them. As one high-level staff member explained, the library’s enthusiasm about youth development was “spilling over” to affect the institution as a whole. She said: “I even heard someone that was writing this grant for senior citizens saying, ‘Maybe we should ask them what they want.’ I thought, ‘Okay!’” Staff, she explained, were increasingly embracing the philosophy of “do this with us instead of us doing it for you,” both for youth and other types of library patrons. Similarly, the executive director stated that she viewed the library’s work with youth development as a catalyst for broadening staff involvement in decision-making.

¹⁶ The one exception to this rule was King County, which staff described as having a highly vertical management structure. The smooth implementation of the Initiative in King County was attributed to the competence of program staff, the support of library leadership, and the fact that this library system was unusually well funded (which of course has many positive repercussions for the system as a whole).

Dedicated Youth Services Administrator

Another institutional factor that was important in implementing the Initiative was whether a library had a high-level staff member whose position was dedicated to managing youth services for the system as a whole. As one executive director explained, many libraries have a shortage of higher-level administrative staff, which negatively impacts their capacity to develop and sustain new programs. She said: “The problem in institutionalization is that with the cutbacks in the 1980s and 90s, local government, particularly libraries, were stripped of all thinking capacity. We lost any ‘assistant to’ or ‘coordinator of,’ and we’re paying the price for that.” With regard to youth programs, this problem manifests itself in the lack of a youth services or young adult coordinator. Even when libraries are committed to youth services, this lack represents a “weak link” in the system that particularly impacts its ability to sustain strong youth programs.

Staff Turnover

A final institutional factor that had an effect on sites’ ability to implement the PLPYD Initiative was the degree of staff turnover, particularly among those most involved in the PLPYD programs. Notably, many of the PLPYD sites reported a high degree of turnover during the course of the PLPYD grant. In Charlotte, for example, 50 percent of all staff positions changed hands during 1995-2000. In Oakland, more than a third of the branch and children’s librarians at the ten branches where PASS! was in operation moved on to other locations or positions during a single 12-month period (Izu, 2001). The Washoe County and Fort Bend County libraries also reported a high degree of staff turnover during the grant period, which made their jobs more difficult. Although it was not clear why there was so much turnover during the implementation of PLPYD at some of the sites, not surprisingly, it had a particularly negative impact on the PLPYD programs when the staff that left had been important to them. At one site, a program coordinator complained that the high degree of turnover had made her own line of supervision “confusing this year.” She herself decided to leave her position the following June in order to take a job “with a much smaller organization where I can feel better utilized.”

“Originally, I was reporting to (Person A), who is not here anymore . . . She was replaced by (Person B), who is interim, as far as I know. I started reporting to (Person C), who had been (Person A’s) supervisor. Now that (Person B) and (Person D) are in the picture, I just found out this morning that I will be reporting to (Person D). That’s one of the challenges, the change in who’s reporting to whom, who can answer the questions.”

~PLPYD Program Coordinator

A high degree of staff turnover in many library systems represents yet another reason why it is important to connect program staff to high-level managers and administrators, cultivate “buy-in” among front-line staff, and provide regular training that reaches a wide range of library personnel. Youth programs that do not develop a broad base of institutional support are unlikely to be sustained over time. To develop such a solid base of support, however, programs must be designed so that they are compatible with staff needs and integrated with the larger library mission. And, as will be discussed below, they must have the capacity to develop a good base of financial support that establishes them as a permanent part of library operations, at least for the foreseeable future.

Working with Community Organizations

Based on the assumption that no single institution can adequately address the needs of all youth, organizational collaboration was an important goal of the PLPYD Initiative. Planners of the Initiative believed community organizations could strengthen library youth development programs by providing resources and expertise in working with youth that library staff did not have. They also believed community organizations would help library staff reach low-income youth who were not currently using the library. Youth-serving organizations and other community agencies, in turn, were drawn to partnering with the library because they viewed it as a stable and reputable institution and one that could provide additional resources and opportunities for low-income youth they were trying to serve.

At the same time, there was no single perspective on how to develop these partnerships or what they should look like in program implementation. Thus, the nine sites differed in their understanding of partnership and their views of the importance of community partners in the implementation of their particular program. For example, one program director, a senior library administrator, explained that the priority in her library's initiative was to create stronger relationships with youth, and that it would dilute these efforts to have to spend a lot of staff time to develop new relationships with community organizations at the same time. Another program project coordinator, who was hired from outside the library, already had connections with youth development and employment agencies in the community and said she wanted to focus on her "partnerships" with library staff.

As described in Chapter 2, a majority of the relationships with community organizations were developed to provide resources and expertise the library did not have but needed to facilitate specific project goals and activities. The types of organizations most frequently involved in PLPYD were youth development programs or youth-serving agencies, employment programs for low-income youth, schools, and publicly funded college and career preparatory programs. These relationships between the library youth programs and partner organizations continued to evolve throughout the Initiative. More than half had an instrumental focus that did not necessarily lead to long-term relationships in which organizational strategies and resources were coordinated and shared. The libraries developed longer-term relationships with a handful of people and organizations, although it was not clear at the end of the implementation period how many of these partnerships would be sustained beyond the period of the grant.

There were several issues that all of the PLPYD sites faced in their partnerships. These issues were choosing organizations with perspectives, resources, and skills that were compatible with and could enhance the efforts of the library, developing common understandings about program goals and expectations, defining partner roles and responsibilities, and coordinating activities. This section examines the opportunities and challenges library staff and community partners encountered in working together.

Opportunities and Challenges in Community Partnerships

For library staff, access and enhanced credibility with youth were invaluable contributions of partner organizations. According to a librarian in Oakland: "[Our partner organization] has

handled the recruitment, personnel, payroll and training of teens for us since the inception of [our program]—something we needed to get the program off the ground.” Many sites reported that another benefit was the sharing of materials in order to facilitate youth programming and training and staff development. Respondents specifically cited sharing facilities, training materials, or curricula (e.g., for building personal and social skills) as a benefit of collaboration.

Representatives of partner organizations also reported several benefits of their work with the library. First, library connections yielded a new and valuable set of resources for youth. These resources ranged from library jobs, to exposure to new areas of interest, to youth participation in the development of a Web page. Second, there were organizational benefits. These included new relationships with other community groups, expanded capacity to support literacy programs, opportunities for staff development and networking, and access to the resources of a large institution, the public library. Several respondents also cited new material resources they received through partnerships, including computers and Internet access.

Several members of partner organizations voiced the belief that PLYD was helping to make the community more aware of library resources and programs and encouraging people to use the library more. One of the partners in Fort Bend County, where the PLYD Initiative was implemented in community centers as well as branch libraries, described the benefits in terms of making people comfortable with library services. She explained:

Transportation is an issue in the county, and it is difficult for people to get to the main library. [The librarians] are going to be able to target more people ... the people they can't reach. [Community members] are afraid to come over to the main library, but ... our parents will be comfortable coming there because their kids are already at our existing programs and they basically know everyone there; they know the staff.

Mutual understanding between libraries and community partners was also valued. Partners also sensed that PLYD was helping the library become more responsive to the different cultures in the county. As one representative of a community-based organization commented, the library will better understand the “struggles [of her community] and the roads we have to cross” as a result of their partnership.

At the same time, staff were realistic about the challenges of partnership. Most of the program and library staff involved in implementing PLYD knew from experience that relationship-building with outside organizations can be very challenging for organizations with different histories, missions, and work styles. It takes time to develop relationships with outside organizations, and one must consider their potential contribution when deciding to enter into a relationship. As the director of one of the nine libraries observed: “Partnerships may be imperative in order to have the resources and support (staff, money) you need, or they could just be another group that the library has to deal with.”

The difficulties that the PLYD libraries and their partners faced in working together were similar to those found in other not-for-profit collaborations. Collaborative work is time-consuming, and a primary concern for many library staff was how to make time to work effectively with outside organizations while covering other library functions. Most notable was

finding time to communicate and work together. “Time is a big problem” was a frequent refrain, as was the statement: “Meetings are important but they take time out of the work day.”

In addition to the problems of coordinating schedules and finding time to communicate, some program staff also noted that finding partners who are “active collaborators” and willing to share tasks, information, and resources can be difficult. In the words of one librarian: “Many are partners in name only.” Finally, funding was always an issue—and perhaps one reason that staff had to contract (although sometimes at a reduced cost) with some of the community organizations for services that might initially have been provided without cost. “It seems every youth service organization is looking for funding too,” said one library administrator. She added: “Lack of money limits partnerships.”

Defining and agreeing on roles and goals was another challenge. One librarian explained: “Like any collaborative effort, defining roles is not easy in the beginning. We need to have a clear agenda and organizational outcomes as well as common youth outcomes for this new entity.” Some library staff expressed concerns about the impact of staff turnover in non-profit organizations on the continuity of a partnership and, in turn, on the quality of the library’s services for youth. A PLYD project coordinator noted that although he and a representative of a partner organization might agree in principle on the aims of a collaboration, there was still the chance that “the partner might not bring in a supportive staff person, and that would affect the kids.”

As Table 14 indicates, based on a survey of library staff and partner organizations in 2001—the midpoint of the Initiative—the general consensus was that the benefits of engaging community organizations as partners in the Initiative were worth the effort. And, in staff interviews at the end of the 3-year implementation period, there seemed to be a general sense that community partnerships had been beneficial to the quality of program implementation and experiences for youth. They also had, in some cases, fostered relationships between the library and the community that would last beyond the Initiative. That is, the benefits of some of the longer-standing relationships built during the PLYD Initiative had been worth the challenges of learning to communicate and work together.

Table 14. Perceptions of the Challenges and Benefits of PLYD Partnerships, 2001*

	<i>% of Respondents</i>		
	Yes	No	Not Sure
Benefits	82	2	16
Challenges	44	14	42

*Based on a survey of 141 program staff, library staff, and staff of community organizations at the midpoint of the Initiative.

Relationships with Schools

Schools were considered a natural and critical partner for the library because of previous connections and access to youth, and all nine libraries had connections with schools in their community. Indeed, staff sometimes emphasized that relationships with schools had priority over other relationships with community organizations:

The first focus is contacts with the schools. That’s a priority. The [focus of the] children’s librarian with schools and day care centers and Head Starts; the young adult librarian is with the middle schools and high schools. Most of the kids who use the library are involved in summer

camps that are sponsored by various church groups. And then we do have private parochial schools in the community, a Muslim school and Catholic schools.

Most library staff considered relationships with schools to be basic to the effort to encourage teens to use the library. School visits by branch staff were a frequent occurrence at all of the PLPYD libraries. Staff of community organizations also believed the library had an important role in addition to that of the schools to provide educational support to low-income youth and, in particular, to improve their access to technology in low-income communities. In the view of the director of a community college preparatory program:

It's the responsibility of local governments to pump a whole lot more money into libraries to make them a bigger resource. In urban environments the digital divide is a huge issue. A lot of my kids don't know how to use computers at all and they're not going to be able to survive. The library is a place that kids can come and use computers on a daily basis and can get to know them. Of course it almost seems secondary or tertiary but reading, to expand their worlds. But I think the primary role of the library right now is to work on that digital divide.

However, library staff—those implementing PLPYD as well as front-line branch staff—acknowledged that relationships with schools were challenging, and as a general rule, were easier to develop on an individual, local neighborhood level. As reported in Chapter 2, in the PLPYD Initiative only four sites developed long-term relationships with schools as part of their program activities. It was not always easy to communicate with school personnel, and contacts were often episodic and unreliable. Because of high rates of teacher and principal turnover in many urban schools, a relationship established one year might be gone the next.

In summary, schools remained challenging to communicate with but were considered important partners in the efforts of public libraries to serve low-income youth. Community arts organizations, youth media programs, and community health and counseling centers seemed to be promising new resources for libraries implementing new youth initiatives. Community development organizations and youth employment organizations were other natural partners for library teen employment programs, but these partnerships depended on clear understandings of the needs and capacity of both the library and the community organization to make them work. As in all relationships, communication, establishing goals, and responsibilities were critical to success. Despite the amount of time it takes to establish relationships with outside organizations, PLPYD library and program staff viewed them as beneficial. First, community organizations could provide teens a broader array of experiences than the library could by itself. Second, collaboration meant that both the library and community organizations could reach more teens than they could individually.

Lessons and Implications

The implementation of the PLPYD Initiative was affected by several institutional factors. These factors were hiring the right program staff and placing them in a well-supported organizational position, building commitment to the new programs among branch managers and front-line library staff, providing relevant staff training, and working effectively with community organizations that could best extend the resources and outreach capacity of the library. Other factors included having an executive director who was strongly supportive of youth

programming, an institutional culture that valued flexibility and innovation, a high-level administrator for youth services capable of integrating the new Initiative into the larger institution, and a relatively low degree of staff turnover, particularly among staff integral to the youth programs.

The implementation experience of the nine sites suggested several lessons for other public libraries seeking to create or expand services for youth.

- ***There are trade-offs in hiring non-library professionals rather than library staff to manage new youth programs in public libraries.*** Outside professionals with experience in education, youth development, and youth employment brought knowledge, experience, and community resources that library staff did not have. However, they did not know the library system and it took them a while to develop working relationships with branch staff. If non-library professionals are hired to run important youth programs, it is critical that they have the time and support necessary to learn the fundamentals of the library system.
- ***A successful library-based youth program requires the involvement and commitment of branch staff that will be impacted by the program.*** It is important for staff to be involved with youth programs despite the fact that they are typically pressed for time. Establishing a new program or orienting a new youth worker will necessarily require an extra investment of staff time at the outset, but this should change with time. Staff buy-in to new or expanded youth programming can be developed in several ways, for example, by connecting programs to the goals of the larger library system, by involving staff in program design and implementation, and by giving staff a role in selecting youth and refining teen positions.
- ***Ongoing staff training is an important part of successful youth programming.*** In order for training to work, however, it must be relevant to staff and respectful of their time constraints. The importance of ongoing training for all staff must be tempered with other demands on staff time. Emphasizing a youth development approach can be very helpful if it encourages staff to relate to teens in new ways and addresses their practical concerns.
- ***Working with individuals and agencies in the community takes time and effort but, if carefully chosen, they can strengthen library-based youth programs.*** Although PLYD program staff connected with a wide number and variety of community organizations during implementation, each site worked extensively with only a small number of community organizations. The most productive relationships were ones formed with people and agencies that could extend the outreach, resources, and expertise of the library but also understood the goals and needs of the library. This required clear and ongoing communication about goals, roles, and responsibilities.

Chapter 5

COST AND FINANCING OF TEEN EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

This section examines the cost and financing of two types of youth programs that were particularly important to the PLYD Initiative and are of interest to the larger library field. We discuss the financial considerations involved in employing teens as paid staff in (1) homework help programs that serve younger children, and in (2) general library operations, including but not limited to providing patrons with computer assistance. Although this discussion draws from lessons learned at all of the PLYD sites, as well as relevant literature in the field, it focuses primarily on the cases of Philadelphia and Oakland with regard to homework help, and King County and Tucson with regard to library assistance. These sites were selected for intensive study because they housed particularly well-developed programs during the course of the Wallace grant that have been ongoing since it ended.

Although youth employment programs were central to the PLYD Initiative, they are relatively unusual in the larger library field. Consequently, at the beginning of this section, we provide a brief discussion of why public libraries might be interested in developing such programs, particularly in the areas of homework and library assistance. Following this, we present an example of the cost structure of each type of program. These cost prototypes are based on a comparative analysis of the cost structure of the programs operating in King County, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Tucson. (Tables itemizing the estimated cost of each of these four programs are included in Appendix C.) Although we discuss in this section why public libraries may want to consider investing in youth employment programs, we do not attempt to provide a cost-benefit analysis of them. Instead, we want to provide a general understanding of the cost factors involved in running these programs, as well as the various means by which they might be financed.

Library Employment and Youth Development

As discussed in Chapter 2, seven of the nine PLYD libraries decided to emphasize paid employment based on findings from focus groups conducted with youth living in low-income communities during planning for the Initiative. When asked for recommendations for how public libraries might better serve teens in their communities, many youth advocated for paid employment. Teens, they believed, wanted and needed to earn money during their nonschool time. Good employment opportunities for youth, however, were rare in their communities. Further, if public libraries employed more youth, these teens could help the library reach out more effectively to the community.

At the same time, many of the library professionals who were involved in designing the Initiative in these sites recognized that youth employment programs could, if properly designed, provide developmentally enriching opportunities for youth. Researchers agree that enabling youth to acquire the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence that can put them on the path toward a fulfilling and productive adult livelihood is a critical component of healthy adolescent development. This task is particularly important given the challenges that the majority of

American youth face in entering the labor market. As noted in the first chapter, the rapidly changing nature of contemporary society makes it difficult for most youth to envision a work trajectory that they might realistically follow into adulthood. This is especially true for those growing up in low-income communities, who tend to have much less exposure to and knowledge about potential adult occupations than their more affluent counterparts.

Although American teenagers take part-time jobs earlier and keep them longer than youth in comparable societies, they generally work in low-skilled service positions (e.g., fast food and retail) that do not necessarily build the type of skills and experience that might help them move toward a desirable adult livelihood. At the same time, too much time spent working at a low-skilled job may negatively impact educational attainment. The fact that U.S. society does not offer youth a structured way of moving from school to work compounds these problems. Although 75 percent of high school graduates will not finish college, the American educational system is heavily oriented toward college prep and pays relatively little attention to helping non-college-bound students prepare for and find work. Consequently, many youth flounder in the labor market after leaving high school, ending up either unemployed or underemployed. Again, this is particularly true for low-income youth, who are least likely to attend college (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000; Panel on High-Risk Youth, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, & National Research Council, 1995).

Being able to work in a position that supports learning and development represents a valuable opportunity for teens. Although the research literature that examines the nature of such positive work experiences for teens is relatively small, it is consistent in its messages. Developmentally supportive work experiences engage youth in tasks that are challenging enough to be engaging, but not so much as to be frustrating. They are structured so that assigned tasks progressively build skills, and they allow for interim assessment and feedback. Although such jobs put youth in a position where they are subject to constraints and contingencies typical of the adult world, they also provide them with relationships with supportive adults who encourage and guide them. Overall, the work experience should provide youth with an opportunity to explore new tasks and roles, learn more about what they like and are good at, experience their own capacity to work, and gain greater knowledge of the opportunities and requirements of the work world (Cambourne, 2002; Larson, et al., in press; Musick, 1999).

As we will discuss in the next chapter, the experience of youth employed in a variety of positions as part of the PLPYD Initiative demonstrates that public libraries are capable of providing teens with valuable work experiences. This chapter considers four cases drawn from the PLPYD Initiative: employing teens as homework help program assistants in Philadelphia and Oakland, and as computer and general library assistants in King County and Tucson. In addition to providing teens with valuable work experiences, administrators at each of these libraries believe that these programs offer important benefits to their institution. Although these perceived benefits vary from program to program and institution to institution, they all include establishing a better connection with the community, and enhancing the standing of the library within it. At the same time, many of the staff involved with these programs view incorporating youth employees into the structure of the library as a primary means of fulfilling their commitment to making developmentally enriching youth programs a central part of their operations.

Teen Homework Help Program Assistants

During the 1990s, homework help programs became a common feature of public libraries. According to the 1999 ALA study funded by the Wallace Foundation, 15 percent of public libraries provide homework assistance for elementary school children, and 12 percent provide homework assistance for middle school children. Over 80 percent of these programs are open 3 to 7 days per week during the school year. Although most do not operate in the summer, some stay open year-round and turn into summer reading clubs or provide other educational programming during those months (American Library Association & Office for Research Statistics, 1999). According to Mediavilla (2001), the number of homework help programs in public libraries is expected to grow substantially in the near future.

There are several reasons for the growing popularity of library-based homework assistance programs. For one, these programs provide public libraries with a constructive means of addressing the challenge of unsupervised children in the library. Having children in a structured program allows their energies to be channeled in a positive direction that is manageable for the library. At the same time, homework assistance programs provide a valuable service for children, families, and the community, particularly in low-income areas. Schools have increased homework requirements for all grade levels. Many of these assignments demand, or can be assisted by, use of computers. Low-income children frequently do not have parents available during the after-school hours, do not have access to fee-based after-school programs, and lack computer access at home. Consequently, the public library is an important resource for them, both in terms of completing their homework and having a safe place to go after school (Mediavilla, 2001). Reflecting this need, 24.5 percent of existing programs are specifically designed for low-income communities (American Library Association & Office for Research Statistics, 1999).

Mediavilla (2001) defines homework assistance programs as those that are “dedicated to meeting the curricular needs of students by providing staff or volunteers trained to assist with homework; dedicated space for student use during specific days and times; and a multi-format collection of materials related to curricular needs.” Although all homework help programs share their basic features, no two programs are exactly alike. Among the PLPYD sites, a particularly important program issue was the extent to which they were focused exclusively on providing homework assistance, as opposed to offering a wider array of educational, enrichment, and recreational activities.¹⁷

According to the 1999 ALA study, 13 percent of existing homework assistance programs include school-aged youth as a part of their program staff. Of these, 22 percent make recommendations about program content or structure, 20 percent help recruit other youth to participate, 17 percent assist with program evaluation, 13 percent help with publicity, 11 percent facilitate or present at events, and 11 percent help with set-up or clean-up. (Fifty-three percent

¹⁷ The PLPYD Initiative funded paid teen staff for homework assistance programs in Philadelphia and Oakland. Teen volunteers in Baltimore and Brooklyn also served as homework helpers as a part of their larger set of responsibilities. In addition, several sites operated homework assistance programs that were not part of the PLPYD Initiative.

are engaged in other, unspecified tasks.) Although no data are available on what percentage of these youth are paid staff as opposed to volunteers, given that over 50 percent of programs are staffed by volunteers, it is likely that most are not paid (ALA, 1999).

Based on these data, it appears that although the use of teens as paid staff in homework assistance programs is relatively unusual, it is something that has the potential to grow in the future. In both Philadelphia and Oakland, the use of paid teen staff has become an important component of the larger homework assistance program. Although the primary purpose of both programs is to serve younger children, library staff at both sites regard the inclusion of a youth employment component as having added significant value to it. In particular, having teen employees has been credited with providing younger children with important mentoring relationships and increasing children's enjoyment of and enthusiasm for the program. In the case of Philadelphia, the use of teen staff was also instrumental in causing the city government to select the library as the site for a larger, government-funded youth employment and training program. More broadly, it has vaulted the library to a position of leadership with regard to youth issues in the community.

Box 3. Philadelphia's Project LEAP and the Teen Library Assistant Program

Philadelphia's homework assistance program, Project LEAP, was established in 1989. LEAP began as a 3-day-a-week program designed to provide homework help, educational and cultural enrichment, and computer literacy activities free of charge to children in grades 2-7 during the school year. Operating in 15 of the library's 54 branches, LEAP was initially funded by the William Penn Foundation and other private foundations. Today, LEAP is a 5-day-a-week program serving children and youth in grades K-12. Operating in every branch, it is now an over \$2.7 million program almost entirely funded by the city.

Teen Library Assistants (TLAs) are paid \$6.37 an hour to provide one-on-one homework, reading, and computer assistance to younger children in the LEAP program. TLAs work an average of 10 hours a week, 48 weeks a year. During this time, they also participate in job training, educational and cultural enrichment programs, and career development workshops. Each LEAP site is staffed by three TLAs who work in partnership with an adult After School Leader (ASL). Branch managers recruit, hire, and supervise TLAs. A new position for experienced TLAs, called Associate Leader (AL), was created at the beginning of the Wallace grant for "outstanding" teens who wish to continue to work at the library while they attend college.

LEAP was awarded the 1999 Excellence in Library Services to Young Adults Award by the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) for youth employment and development.

Box 4. Oakland's PASS! Teen Mentor Program

The PASS! (Partners for Achieving School Success) Program was established in 1994 with funding from a private anonymous grant to provide after-school homework assistance for children in grades 2-8. Originally, PASS! operated in 10 of 16 library branches Monday-Thursday afternoons. Due to funding cuts, operations have been reduced to 8 branches on Tuesday-Thursday afternoons only. As of 2003, approximately 57% of program funding was provided by private grants raised by the Oakland Library Foundation, with another 30% provided by a grant from the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth. The remaining cost of the program, representing the PASS! Coordinator's salary, was covered by the library budget.

Teen Mentors work 7-8 hours a week and are paid approximately \$2,800 annually. Three or four Teen Mentors work in conjunction with an adult Library Assistant at each of the 8 sites. Youth also receive regular employment and educational development training. Each site also has the support of a Library Aide and volunteer tutors. The Branch Manager supervises each site.

PASS! was also awarded the 1999 Excellence in Library Services to Young Adults Award by the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) for youth employment and development.

Computer/Library Assistants

Although employing teens to assist with routine library tasks other than shelving books is rare in the larger library field, it formed a central part of the PLPYD Initiative. In addition to the programs in King County and Tucson, Fort Bend and Washoe County also employed teens as computer assistants, and Baltimore used teen volunteers as computer assistants. As previously discussed, all of the sites that had originally employed youth to assist exclusively with computers found that this was not enough work to keep them busy. Consequently, their job descriptions were expanded to include other tasks. In all cases, however, youth were engaged in work that extended substantially beyond the confines of the traditional page position, which is essentially limited to sorting and shelving books. For a number of libraries, including King County and Tucson, learning that youth could successfully perform a much wider range of duties represented one of the most important outcomes of the Wallace grant.

In King County, the Techno Teen Initiative was used as the foundation to launch a new Library Page Fellowship program after the Wallace grant ended. In Tucson, the Computer Aide Program continued in essentially the same form (see text boxes, below). Both represent unusual programs. Research conducted for this report identified only two similar initiatives: the Page Fellows program at Queens Library in New York, and the Tech 37 Cyber Navigators program at the Chicago Public Library.¹⁸ There is reason to believe that such programs could be of greater interest to public libraries in the near future, however, because these programs serve the

¹⁸ The Page Fellows program at Queens Library is a 15-week course for youth ages 17-21 that encourages library pages to explore librarianship as a possible career choice. (Sources: http://www.qbpl.com/whatsnew/fellows_0799.asp and Chelton, (2000). The Cyber Navigators program in Chicago employs high school juniors and seniors to assist library patrons with computers (<http://www.chipublib.org/008subject/003cya/teened/tech37intro.html>, and Costello et al. (2001) as does the Boston Public Library CyberCity Library Youth Initiative (www.bpl.org).

important function of helping to diversify library staff, while developing a needed pipeline of potential recruits to the library profession.

There is considerable concern within the library field regarding the relatively advanced age of most library professionals, the difficulty of recruiting new librarians, and the overall lack of diversity in the field. Librarians are, as a group, substantially older than their counterparts in comparable professions. Sixty-three percent are over 45 years old, as compared with 39 percent in comparable fields. And, only 12 percent are in the 25- to 34-year-old age range. At the same time, there is a paucity of new entrants into the field, and a particular dearth of minority candidates. An ALA survey conducted in 2001 found that 73 percent of libraries reported difficulty in recruiting MLS degree holders during the past 6 months (Lynch, 2001). A 1998 ALA survey designed to assess the race, ethnicity, and gender of full-time librarians found that over 86 percent of librarians working in public libraries are White, less than 6 percent are Black, less than 5 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, less than 2 percent are Hispanic, and less than 1 percent are Native American (Lynch, 1998).

The current president of the ALA, John W. Berry, has made the “graying” of the library profession, the difficulty in recruiting librarians, and the need to bring more minorities into the library field “signature issues” for his term. In the late 1990s, the ALA’s Spectrum Initiative similarly stressed the importance of recruitment for diversity. In April 2002, the ALA’s First National Town Hall Meeting, “Recruitment @your library,” emphasized the need to recruit librarians who reflect the diversity of the communities that they serve. As discussed in Chapter 1, this widespread concern for diversity reflects the fact that public libraries are attempting to serve an increasingly heterogeneous patron base (Lenzini, 2002).

Both the Library Page Fellowship program in King County and the Page Fellows program at Queens Library are explicitly designed to address the lack of diversity among staff by providing young adults from local communities with an opportunity to learn about the library, and encouraging them to consider pursuing careers in the library field. And, although youth development has represented the primary focus of Tucson’s Computer Aide Program, senior administrators and librarians reported that it was also important in terms of diversifying library staff. Although it remains to be seen how many graduates of these programs will go on to careers in librarianship, they have been consistently successful in diversifying library staff in the short term. At the same time, librarians in both King County and Tucson reported that they enjoyed working with the teen assistants and found the work that they did extremely helpful.¹⁹ The fact that these programs have been successful on the level of day-to-day operations and have the potential to address important problems facing public libraries suggests that they may be worth promoting in the field more broadly.

¹⁹ Youth, in turn, reported mixed experiences depending on the degree of responsibility they were given, the variety of their tasks, and their relationships with their supervisors. Youth who seemed more satisfied with their jobs were ones who reported positive interactions with their supervisors and library patrons. They preferred to be busy, to be able to interact with patrons (despite the occasional challenges that could arise in those interactions), use their computer skills, and perform a variety of tasks. Most youth did not mind doing tasks such as checking in returned books, shelving books, and helping with designing posters, displays, and materials for children’s programs, as long as they were not their primary duties.

Box 5. The King County Library Page Fellowship (LPF) Program

The King County Library System established the LPF program in 2003. It is fully incorporated into the regular library budget. LPF represents a direct outgrowth of the library's Techno Teen program, which was funded by the Wallace grant and terminated when the grant ended. Like the Techno Teen program, LPF provides young adults with an opportunity to work in the library while receiving educational and employment development training. (Although recruitment is targeted to 14- to 23-year-olds, all ages may apply.) In contrast to the Techno Teen program, LPF emphasizes educating participants about the library system and employment opportunities within it in an effort to increase the number of potential library recruits, particularly from diverse local communities.

As of 2003, a total of 40 Page Fellows were employed throughout the library's 42-branch system. Of these, 25 were new to the library, and 15 were regular pages who applied and were accepted into the program. Pay begins at \$9.12 an hour and may go up to \$10.95. Page Fellows receive benefits including paid sick and vacation leave, disability insurance, and counseling resources. They work 15 hours a week. Of these, 10 hours are spent performing page duties, and 5 hours are devoted to program-related activities including training, job shadowing, and performing work duties designed to be enriching and engaging. Page Fellows who are new to the library system may stay in the program 20-24 months. Those who had been hired as pages may be in it 12-24 months. Graduates from the program are encouraged to pursue a new, higher-level position at the library or elsewhere, and they are eligible to become Library Assistants.

Box 6. The Tucson Computer Aide Program (CAP)

CAP continues the same program established by the library as part of the PLPYD Initiative. As of 2003, a total of 10 Computer Aides were working in 6 different branches. All had been employed in that position during the period of the Wallace grant and were retained after it ended. Computer Aides are paid \$9.30 an hour and work 10 hours a week. Although more traditional page duties have been added to the job description since the Wallace grant ended, Computer Aides continue to perform a wide variety of tasks, including helping patrons with computers; producing fliers, labels, and bibliographies; and assisting with story times.

Computer Aides receive 40 hours of training annually, which is conducted by a combination of internal staff and external consultants. Prior to receiving training, Computer Aides engage in two 4-hour job shadows with their supervising librarian in order to better familiarize themselves with the library. CAP is funded by the library, which diverted money that had been previously allocated for pages to pay for the program.

Costs of Teen Employment Programs

Although there are compelling reasons to establish teen employment programs, there is no question that they are expensive to run. They require a high level of commitment from libraries, particularly from the staff that are most involved. We previously described in this chapter factors that help or hinder the implementation of youth programs more generally. Because these lessons were in large part drawn from the four sites featured in this section, they typically apply to the homework and library assistant programs under discussion. Consequently, when considering the costs of these programs, it is important to keep in mind the wider range of factors that make them more or less successful in practice.

It is also important to realize that identifying the cost of any program requires a significant amount of interpretation and estimation. Although some costs are straightforward, such as the hourly pay of teen workers, many others are much more difficult to pin down precisely. For example, having teen employees in a branch will demand some amount of time and attention from the branch manager or an equivalent staff member. For a full estimation of costs, the time that such individuals spend on the program should be estimated and included. But, such costs are rarely considered to be part of the program budget. Consequently, it is important to consider both formal costs that are itemized in a program budget and the wider range of costs that can be considered in-kind contributions from the library.

Costs will also vary in conjunction with different stages of program development. A distinction is commonly made between start-up and ongoing costs, because beginning a new program requires expenditures that an established program does not. Economies of scale also need to be considered. For example, if the infrastructure needed to establish a program in three branches is enough to have it in ten, then the cost per branch will decrease as the program is expanded. If it expands to the point where additional staff are required, however, then the overall cost must be adjusted accordingly. Similarly, various types of efficiencies may or may not come into play. A dedicated staff member who has years of experience with program operations will almost certainly be more efficient than one who is inexperienced or lacks dedication. And, different programs, as well as the larger institutions that house them, will be structured in more or less efficient ways.

Cost estimates for sample teen library and homework assistant programs are presented in Tables 15 and 16. These estimates are based on actual cost data for the youth employment programs in King County, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Tucson. (Tables itemizing these data are in Appendix C.) Because these programs are quite different in terms of their size and structure, they cannot be directly compared on an item-by-item basis. (In addition, what staff at each site consider to represent the full range of program costs varies substantially.) Consequently, Tables 17 and 18 present a simplified composite of each type of program in order to make the central cost elements involved easier to understand.

As the tables show, these teen employment programs will typically be quite expensive, ranging from over \$21,000 per site for a teen library assistant program to almost \$40,000 per site for a teen homework assistant program. When considering these expenses, however, it is important to keep in mind that these tables are designed to include a full range of costs that are typically not included in calculating the cost of employment. In other words, they are intended to make visible what are usually embedded and therefore less noticeable costs, such as the time needed to supervise lower-level employees. In addition, in the case of homework help programs, it is impossible to fully separate the cost of employing teen assistants from that of the overall program, because these positions only exist as part of a larger structure.

As seen in Table 15, budgeted costs may in some cases account for a little more than half of the total cost of a program. Of course, what counts as a budgeted cost, as opposed to an in-kind contribution, is highly variable. (Tucson, for example, considers the cost of the program director to be an in-kind contribution, whereas the other sites do not.) In most cases, however,

the full costs of a program will significantly exceed the specific amounts listed in the program budget. And, although libraries will not typically attempt to identify this full range of costs—for example, what percentage of utility costs are directly attributable to operating a homework help program—it is useful to consider all of them in order to have a better understanding of the institutional resources that youth employment programs may require.

Table 15. Sample Cost Estimate: Teen Computer/Library Assistant Positions (2 @ each of 10 sites)
(2003 dollars)

	Base Cost*	% Time	Actual Cost	% Cost
<u>BUDGETED COSTS</u>				
<u>Teen Salaries</u>				
Teen Assistants (2 @ 10 hrs/wk; 48 wks/yr)	\$6.50/hour	48 wks/yr	\$6,240 x 10 =	\$62,400 29.1%
<i>Fringe benefits (10% total salaries)</i>				\$6,240 2.9%
Total Teen Salaries			\$68,640	32.1%
<u>Program Staff</u>				
Program Director	\$55,838	50%		\$27,919 13.0%
Administrative support	\$25,000	15%		\$3,750 1.8%
<i>Fringe benefits (20% total salaries)</i>				\$6,084 2.8%
Total Program Staff			\$37,753	17.6%
<u>Direct Costs</u>				
Youth training	\$2,500			\$2,500 1.2%
Food & special events	\$500			\$500 0.2%
Total Direct Costs			\$3,000	1.4%
<u>IN-KIND SUPPORT</u>				
<u>Library Personnel</u>				
Senior administrator	\$65,665	10%		\$6,566 3.1%
Main library—Librarian	\$46,246	15%		\$6,937 3.2%
Branch librarians	\$45,210	15%	\$6,781 x 9 =	\$61,029 28.5%
<i>Fringe benefits (20% total salaries)</i>				\$16,263 7.6%
Total Library Personnel			\$90,795	42.4%
<u>Indirect Costs</u>				
Staff development	\$2,500			\$2,500 1.2%
Materials & supplies	\$500			\$500 0.2%
Overhead (est. @ 10% annual budgeted costs)				\$10,939 5.1%
Total Indirect Costs			\$13,939	6.5%
<u>TOTAL COSTS</u>				
Total Budgeted Program Costs				\$109,393 51.1%
Total In-Kind Support				\$104,734 48.9%
GRAND TOTAL			\$214,127	100.0%
Total Budgeted Program Costs Per Site				\$10,939 5.1%
Total In-Kind Support Per Site				\$10,473 4.9%
GRAND TOTAL PER SITE (@ 2 teens per site)			\$21,412	10.0%

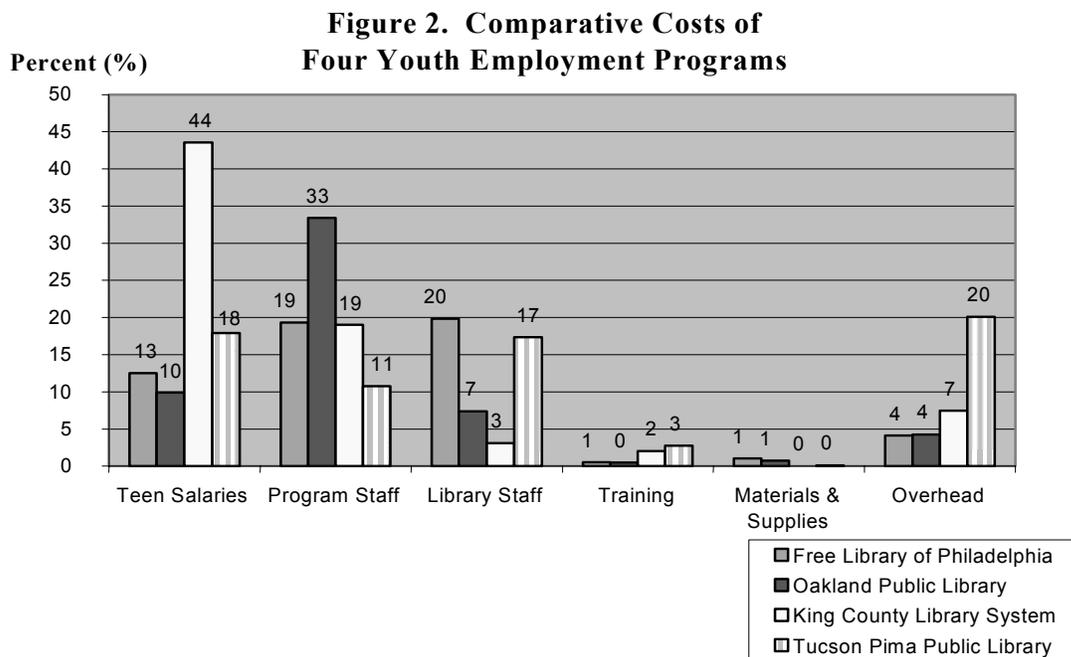
Table 16. Sample Cost Estimate: Teen Homework Help Mentor Positions (2 at each of 10 sites) (2003 dollars)

	Base Cost*	% Time	Actual Cost	% Cost
Teen Salaries				
Teen mentors (2 @ 10 hrs/wk; 48 wks/yr)	\$6.50/hour	48 wks/yr	\$6,240 x 10 sites =	\$62,400 15.6%
<i>Fringe benefits (10% total salaries)</i>				\$6,240 1.6%
Total Teen Salaries				\$68,640 17.2%
Program Staff				
Program Director	\$55,838	100%		\$55,838 14.0%
Program Assistant	\$30,000	50%		\$15,000 3.8%
<i>Fringe benefits (20% total salaries)</i>				\$6,084 0.2%
Adult Program Leaders (10 @ 16 hrs/wk, 28 wks/yr)	\$15/hour	768 hrs/yr	\$11,504 x 10 sites =	\$115,040 28.8%
<i>Fringe benefits (10% total salaries)</i>				\$11,504 2.9%
Total Program Staff				\$203,466 51.0%
Direct Costs				
Youth training	\$2,500			\$2,500 0.6%
Food & special events	500			\$500 0.1%
Total Direct Costs				\$3,000 0.8%
IN-KIND SUPPORT				
Library Personnel				
Senior administrator	\$65,665	10%		\$6,566 1.7%
Main library—Librarian	\$46,246	15%		\$6,937 1.7%
Branch librarians	\$45,210	15%	\$6,781 x 9 branches =	\$61,029 15.3%
<i>Fringe benefits (20% total salaries)</i>				\$16,263 4.1%
Total Library Personnel				\$90,795 22.8%
Indirect Costs				
Staff development	\$3,000			\$3,000 0.8%
Materials & supplies	\$250/site			\$2,500 0.6%
Overhead (est. @ 10% annual budgeted costs)				\$27,511 6.9%
Total Indirect Costs				\$33,011 8.3%
TOTAL COSTS				
Total Budgeted Program Costs				\$275,106 68.9%
Total In-Kind Support				\$123,806 31.0%
GRAND TOTAL				\$398,912 100.0%
Total Budgeted Program Costs Per Site				\$27,511 6.9%
Total In-Kind Support Per Site				\$12,381 3.1%
GRAND TOTAL PER SITE (@ 2 teens per site)				\$39,892 10.0%

* Base costs for senior administrator, librarians, and Program Director represent mean national salaries for comparable positions as of April 2003 (see (Lynch, 2003). Actual costs at PLYD libraries were considerably higher (see Appendix C). All other base costs listed represent estimates based on Chapin Hall Center for Children PLYD data.

Tables 15 and 16 also illustrate that employing youth in homework help programs typically will be more expensive than having them serve as library assistants. This, of course, makes sense, as youth employment is only one potential component of a homework help program, which is, by definition, a much larger operation. Thus, homework help programs generally require an additional layer of staffing in the form of adult program leaders who work with teen mentors at each site. In addition, these programs will probably require more of a time commitment on the part of the program director, given the wider range of program elements involved.

The comparative distribution of costs incurred in the King County, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Tucson programs is presented in Figure 2. Again, these data are based on the cost information collected from each site (see Appendix C). When considering this comparative distribution of program costs, it is important to remember that these figures reflect subjective differences in how costs were calculated at each site, as well as variations in program structure, salary and benefit levels, and investments in program-related infrastructure. In other words, they represent the different ways in which staff involved in managing these programs understand the costs involved, in addition to more objective differences among them. Consequently, they should be understood as a rough guide to comparative cost structures, rather than a precise reflection of different program costs.



As Figure 2 shows, by far the largest component of costs involved in both homework and library assistant programs is personnel, including teen salaries, and program and library staff. Notably, some of the more dramatic differences in these categories are due to the different ways in which program costs were calculated. King County, for example, did not include the cost of the time of supervising librarians at each branch, whereas the other three sites did (see Appendix C). In all cases, however, these personnel expenses dwarf those of the other four categories combined (i.e., training, materials and supplies, overhead, and other). Whether counted as part

of the program budget or as an in-kind contribution, staffing and supporting these teen employment programs represent the greatest cost element involved.

Individual Cost Factors

In order to better understand the costs involved in operating programs that employ teens as homework or library assistants, it is helpful to consider each of the cost factors itemized in Tables 15 and 16 on an individual basis. The following discussion of these factors is based on interviews conducted with staff in King County, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Tucson regarding the cost information for each site presented in Appendix C. Given the many similarities between the cost structure of programs that employ teens as homework assistants and library assistants, both types of programs are discussed together unless otherwise noted.

Start-Up Costs

As noted above, start-up costs must be considered separately from ongoing costs. Unfortunately, we do not have detailed information from any sites regarding start-up costs. (The two homework help programs under consideration started years before the Wallace grant began, and interviews regarding the costs of the teen library assistant programs were not conducted until Spring 2003, several years after they had started.) However, some general considerations regarding start-up costs can be noted.

Mediavilla (2001) recommends that libraries that are interested in establishing an after-school homework help program first conduct a community needs assessment to determine the extent to which there is an unmet demand for such a service in the area. For library assistant programs, an equivalent type of needs assessment could be conducted to identify the library's need to diversify its staff and establish a source of potential recruits. At the same time, the library could reflect on how such a program would fit into its commitment to youth services and programs more broadly. In both cases, the library's capacity to develop and sustain an expensive youth employment program should be carefully considered.

If the library decides to establish a new youth employment program, specific start-up costs should include:

- Program planning (e.g., establishing job descriptions and specifying supervisory relationships);
- Developing staff and youth trainings;
- Consulting with supervising librarians at each participating branch;
- Recruiting and hiring teens and other program staff;
- Establishing any desired program partnerships;
- Purchasing needed equipment, materials, and supplies; and
- Planning for future program evaluation.

In the case of homework assistance programs, there is an additional need to publicize the program among children, families, schools, and child-serving organizations in the community, as well as to establish dedicated areas within the library for the program.

Budgeted Costs

Teen salaries. A common theme across the various programs and sites involved in the larger PLPYD Initiative was that libraries need to pay teens more than the minimum wage in order to attract and retain the type of youth employees that they want. Among the four youth employment programs highlighted in this section, the actual cost of teen salaries ranged from a low of \$6.37 an hour in Philadelphia to a high of \$10.95 an hour for experienced Page Fellows in King County. (As noted above, however, Page Fellows are not necessarily teens. Although recruitment for the program is targeted at 14- to 23-year-olds, all ages may apply.) Given that overall salary levels in King County, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Tucson are considerably higher than ALA averages, Tables 17 and 18 employ the relatively low teen salary level of \$6.50 an hour. What libraries should pay teens will vary, however, according to prevailing norms and competing job opportunities in their communities.

Program Director. Staff at each of the four sites agree that it is important to have a program director who is responsible for overseeing a teen homework or library assistant program. Programs will not be successful unless there is someone dedicated to making sure that they are running smoothly on a day-to-day basis.²⁰ If possible, the cost of a program director should be included in the library budget, as opposed to being reliant on outside fundraising efforts. Otherwise, the threat that there will not be sufficient funding to continue this position tends to undermine the stability of the program.

Whether a program director is needed on a full-time or a part-time basis depends on the size of the program. According to one senior administrator in Philadelphia, a homework help program must be large enough to merit at least 25-50 percent of the time of one individual staff member in order for it to work well. Consequently, a library might want to consider starting up a new program with three branches and one program director at 25 percent time. If the program expanded to five to ten branches, it would require someone at least 50 percent time. (Again, given that homework help programs involve a wider range of components than library assistant programs, the time that they require from a program director will be greater. Consequently, Table 15 lists a program director at 50 percent time for a library assistant program at ten branches, and Table 16 lists a program director at 100 percent time for a homework help program at ten branches.)

Responsibilities of the program director typically include recruiting and hiring teen workers (and, in the case of homework help programs, adult staff), developing and managing youth and staff training modules, communicating with library staff, making site visits, attending meetings, troubleshooting, working with program partners, publicity, managing program evaluations, and preparing budgets and reports. In the case of homework help programs, the program director also has to spend a significant amount of time developing and refining the

²⁰ LEAP represents an exception to the rule, because it does not have an individual Program Director. Rather, three people share the responsibility for directing it, in what adds up to the equivalent of one full-time position. This arrangement was developed in response to the requirements of the different public and private funding streams that are combined to finance the LEAP program, as well as the different work responsibilities that employees of the library and the library foundation are allowed. Although this arrangement works well in Philadelphia, staff agreed that the model of a single Program Director would apply to most cases.

homework-related programs and activities. This may include developing relationships with local schools in order to better coordinate homework assistance. In addition, these programs often employ volunteers who must be recruited, hired, and trained.

Program Assistant. Typically, a program director requires some assistance in handling basic administrative tasks such as typing, filing, answering the phone, maintaining databases, running errands, and coordinating meetings and site visits. In some programs, this work is formally handled by a program assistant who is included as part of the program budget. (Both King County and Oakland, for example, include a 50-percent-time program assistant in their budgets.) In other cases, this work is picked up by various library staff members and must be estimated as a part of general overhead costs. In Tucson, for example, branch librarians had to assist the program director with additional administrative tasks after the part-time program assistant position was eliminated due to budget cuts.

Adult Homework Help Program Supervisors

As discussed above, homework help programs typically employ an adult to supervise the program during the hours that it is in operation at each site. Although this person generally works under the supervision of the branch manager, she has the primary responsibility for working with participating children, as well as with teen library assistants, on a day-to-day basis. This places high demands on the adult homework help supervisor, who should ideally be good at both working with children, collaborating with teens, and coordinating with librarians.

However, the nature of this position generally makes it hard to recruit good adult homework help program supervisors unless a fairly high salary is offered. In particular, the odd hours and part-time pay that it entails—working in the after-school hours, frequently less than 5 days a week, and usually only during the school year—will not be attractive to many otherwise desirable candidates. In Oakland, for example, many librarians were unhappy with the performance of the adult supervisors, with one commenting that the “biggest difficulty with PASS! is hiring good Program Leaders.” And, for their part, many Program Leaders were unhappy because they felt alienated from and under-appreciated by their branch manager.

Philadelphia’s response to this problem has been to commit to paying adult After-School Leaders a relatively high hourly wage (currently \$16 an hour). Although there has been some resentment of this move on the part of full-time staff, senior staff involved with the LEAP program believe that it is essential to maintain program quality. As one top-level manager explained:

LEAP has become a model of after-school programming in the city, and part of that I credit to [the senior director] because she won’t go in and say I’ll do it for \$10,000 [a site]. In recreation centers, where they hire after-school leaders for \$8 per hour, you can’t run this kind of quality program. The staff is one of your most important commodities, and you have to pay. After-School Leaders get paid more than support staff in libraries, which is a bone of contention. But if you’re going to hire someone on an hourly basis, you have to pay more than you do for a full-time employee with job security.

College Mentors

Although college mentors do not form a part of most homework help programs, both Oakland and Philadelphia have employed them in different capacities. In Oakland, four college students are employed to work two afternoons a week in a separate homework help program for teens. Each is paid a total of \$5,256 annually to work on a 13-percent-time basis. (The total cost is \$21,025 annually.) In Philadelphia, six Associate Leaders are paid \$10 an hour to work 15 hours a week, 48 weeks a year. (The total cost is \$43,200 annually.)

As previously discussed, these Associate Leader positions have helped to strengthen the LEAP program by establishing a “career ladder” for youth that can take them from being middle school volunteers to high school and college-aged employees. Associate Leaders were not, however, added to LEAP until it was well established and well funded. (LEAP was established in 1989, and Associate Leaders were not added until the beginning of the Wallace grant in 2000.) As can be seen from the above figures, adding any additional layer of staff to a homework help program increases its overall cost quite quickly. Currently, Associate Leader positions and the annual Teen Summit are the only parts of the LEAP program that are not funded by the city. The fact that LEAP has so much city funding makes it possible for the library to attempt to sustain this component of the program through dedicated private fundraising.

Other Homework Help Program Staff

The PASS! program includes several additional staff positions, including a 48-percent-time Outreach Coordinator, a 48-percent-time Assistant Coordinator, and a 38-percent-time Library Aide who assist with the program at each site (see Appendix C). As seen in Figure 2, the proportion of the overall program budget that PASS! dedicates to program staff is correspondingly quite high (60%, as opposed to 24% in Philadelphia). Again, these figures underline the fact that adding additional layers of program staff will dramatically increase overall program costs.

Other Direct Costs²¹

Youth Training

As we discussed earlier in this chapter, training represents a critical part of any developmentally oriented youth program. Each of the four youth employment programs featured in this section included money for youth training as a part of their formal program budgets. As seen in Figure 2, the overall money allocated for all training (including both youth and staff) in each program was comparatively small (less than 5% of total program costs). However, youth training is an important part of each program. Tucson, for example, conducts 40 hours of youth training annually, and King County provides two to three trainings for Page Fellows per month.

²¹ After the end of the Wallace grant, LEAP added an online homework help program to its operations in ten branches. Although there is a subscription fee for this service that should be included as a direct cost, information on it was not available at the time of the Chapin Hall interviews.

To a large extent, the comparative cost of youth training is low because the libraries employed in-house staff to conduct sessions, including librarians, computer technicians, and program directors. Even when money was allocated to bring in external trainers, however, the relative cost of youth training remained small. The Library Page Fellowship program, for example, includes \$10,000 for staff and youth training, most of which is dedicated to bringing in external facilitators. However, training costs represent only 3 percent of total program costs. This is particularly notable given that King County's cost estimate, unlike the other three sites, does not include in-kind contributions such as the time that branch librarians spend on the program. Again, the relatively low cost of training underscores the comparatively high cost of program and library personnel.

Food and Special Events

Food and special events played an important role both in the programs featured in this section and others that were a part of the PLPYD Initiative. Although the total cost for these items was comparatively quite small in both the Philadelphia LEAP, Oakland PASS!, and Tucson Computer Aide Program budgets, staff at each site reported that providing food at teen trainings, or having special parties or events is an important part of the larger teen employment program. (In Figure 2, the cost of these items is included in "Other.")

Notably, both LEAP and PASS! cut snacks for participating children out of their programs after including them for a short time. In both cases, the decision to eliminate snacks was driven by the complications that they caused with regard to storage, clean-up, child dynamics, and general program management. Although their cost was relatively small, the problems generated by providing them were many. (As this example demonstrates, the significance of a program component is not always directly correlated with its cost.)

In-Kind Support I: Library Personnel

Tables 15 and 16 list additional library personnel as providing in-kind support to programs that should be counted as a part of their overall cost. This is based on the finding from the four sites highlighted in this section and the PLPYD Initiative more broadly that successful youth programs required some consistent time commitment on the part of a senior administrator, as well as the ongoing involvement of librarians in branches where they are operating. As can be seen in Appendix C, King County, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Tucson vary with regard to how they itemized these costs, and even whether they counted them at all. (In King County, this additional library staff time was not counted as it was considered to be part of regular staff duties.) Regardless of how costs are calculated, however, it is important to remember that youth programs require the involvement of library staff beyond those that are formally dedicated to the program.

Senior Administrator

As detailed in Appendix C, the estimated cost of time spent by senior administrators on youth employment programs varied across the four sites from 0 to 20 percent. In all cases, however, staff agreed that having the active support of at least one high-level administrator was crucial to

program success. As discussed previously, program directors who do not have this type of ongoing support may become overly isolated from the rest of the institution, which works to the detriment of their program. Tables 15 and 16 both list 10-percent-time as a reasonable time estimate for senior administrative program support.

Librarians

The amount of time that librarians spend on youth employment programs operating in their branch will vary depending on their familiarity with the program, the quality of their relationships with teens and other program employees, and the turnover rate of teens and other program staff. Homework help programs will typically require more time on an ongoing basis from branch librarians than will teen assistant programs due to the volume of children they bring in and the more complex mix of program activities and staff duties that they involve. (In Philadelphia, for example, 15% of the branch managers and children's librarian time is allocated for LEAP, which pretty much takes over library branches during the after-school hours.) In Oakland, Philadelphia, and Tucson, the time required from staff for program-related trainings was also included in the staff time estimates listed as in-kind contributions.

Other Personnel Considerations

Staff involved with youth employment programs in two sites emphasized that additional library staff were involved in the operation of their programs beyond those itemized on their cost estimates. One senior administrator involved with Philadelphia's LEAP, for example, explained: "There's not one part of this library that we've not had to deal with in making this program work." As the program grew and developed, those responsible for running it had to build good working relationships with staff working in a wide range of departments, including development, marketing, extensions, public service, human resources, custodial and buildings, security, information technology, collection development, and processing.

In Philadelphia, the extensions department (which works with branches), for example, had to decide how to respond to the increased number of children using the library because of the LEAP program. As a library administrator reported: "We didn't give [the branches] more staff, and we went from 3,000 to 45,000 kids" coming into the library during the after-school hours. The human resources department had to adjust to the fact that LEAP began to employ more and more staff, including seasonal and temporary workers. Because Philadelphia is a highly unionized library, this raised many union-related issues that had to be negotiated. "I've been sued by the unions more times than I can tell you," one senior administrator reported. (All of these cases to date have either been settled or won by the library.) LEAP administrators have tangled with the custodial and buildings department "because children cause messes." They have also had to work with security. One administrator said: "If (we) want positive youth development to happen and mentoring to happen, (we) can't have guards like prison guards."

One program administrator in King County explained:

I really think what's really important is not the specific number (of library staff involved), but understanding that if you're going to implement a program like this throughout the system, many different departments are going to have a role, and some kind of participation in it.

The cost of this additional staff time is typically included as part of overhead costs, which is estimated according to a general rule employed by the institution (for example, 10 percent of budgeted program costs).

In-Kind Support II: Indirect Costs

Staff Development and Training

The importance of staff training and development for youth programs was a consistent finding throughout the PLYD Initiative. Although the dollars allocated for this purpose represent a relatively small part of the overall cost of youth employment programs in King County, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Tucson, staff in all four sites agree that staff training is essential. In Tucson, one program staff member recommends that staff involved with a new teen library assistant program should spend at least 48 hours in training and meetings over the course of its first year. After that, she believes that this time could be reduced substantially, provided that there is little turnover among youth or library staff. In King County, staff trainings are conducted on a quarterly basis, in addition to two or three annual group staff meetings involving all participating branches.

Staff training is particularly essential for homework help programs, because both program and library staff need to know how to work productively with children. As one senior administrator in Philadelphia explained: “You can’t do homework assistance if your definition of homework assistance is helping kids with their worksheets If you’re not training your staff, you’re hurting kids.” Ongoing staff training, she continued, is necessary to maintaining a quality program. Many programs, she believes, make the mistake of training staff initially, and then “putting people out there and leaving them.” She added: “And then they can’t understand why a year or two later . . . the level of quality is not the same as it was at the beginning, when the people were just trained.”

Materials and Supplies

As seen in Figure 2, materials and supplies represented only 1 percent or less of overall program costs in each of the four sites. (This category includes such items as basic office supplies, program publications, and, in the case of homework help programs, arts and crafts materials.) Although homework help programs will generally require substantially more materials and supplies than will teen library assistant programs, their cost is miniscule compared with that of program and library staff.

Overhead

As noted above, overhead costs are generally estimated according to a formula that the library uses for all programs and grant applications. LEAP, for example, calculates general overhead costs as \$3,000 per site. King County estimated overhead costs as 10 percent of the total Library Page Fellowship program budget. As seen in Figure 2, the proportion of total program costs represented by overhead ranged from a low of 6 percent in Philadelphia to a high of 25 percent in

Tucson. Given that the latter figure was a guess on the part of the staff member interviewed, however, it is of limited significance.

Financing of Teen Employment Programs

In this section, we describe how King County, Tucson, Philadelphia, and Oakland funded their teen employment programs following the completion of the Wallace grant in Fall 2002. This discussion is combined with pertinent information drawn from the other PLPYD sites, as well as the relevant library literature. Given that employing teens in anything other than a traditional page position is rare in public libraries, there is no research that focuses specifically on how teen employment programs might be financed. However, some useful information can be drawn from other sources, such as the funding of homework help programs and youth programs more broadly. Both public and private funding sources are considered, including the local, state, and federal governments; library foundations; private, corporate, and community foundations; Friends of the Library groups; and local community organizations, businesses, and schools.

Current Financing of PLPYD Programs

Although the specific means by which each of the four sites is currently financing its teen employment program vary, all rely on local funding sources. Because the availability of funding is dependent on the particularities of each individual institution and the larger context in which it is embedded, there is no generally applicable formula that can be derived. These sites, however, provide some sense of the various ways in which the financing needed to institutionalize teen employment programs might be established.

After the Wallace grant was completed, King County was able to include \$372,884 for the Library Page Fellowship program in its larger library budget. The primary reason the library was able to do this is because it is, as senior administrators commonly emphasized, in an exceptionally good financial situation. Set up as an independent junior taxing district, the library receives a portion of local property tax revenues and has a stable source of funding. According to one senior administrator, King County is the fourth highest per capita publicly supported library in the United States. This provides the library with an opportunity to pursue new program options that it believes are particularly promising without having to engage in external fundraising or to divert money from other library operations.²²

Although Tucson is in a less favorable financial position than King County, it was also able to incorporate funding for the Computer Aide Program into its regular library budget when the Wallace grant ended. This was accomplished by diverting money that had been allocated for page positions to pay for a total of ten Computer Aides in the six branches where they had been

²² The favorable financial situation of the library was disrupted somewhat in 2002 when Washington State passed the “747 Initiative,” which mandated that public entities could only increase taxes by a maximum of 1 percent unless that ceiling was raised by referendum. (The effects of each referendum stay in effect for 3 years. After that, another referendum must be held if any exceptions are to be extended.) Although the library succeeded in passing a referendum that raised their tax increase to the maximum of 6 percent allowed by law (winning with an impressive 66% of the vote), it cost them \$800,000 to get on ballot. Because they now will have to deal with this problem regularly, their financial situation is somewhat less favorable.

previously employed. Although the Computer Aide job description was changed to include more traditional page duties, it remains a distinct position. In addition, \$2,220 of youth training money continues to be earmarked for teens employed in the program. This example suggests that even libraries that are saddled with the budget constraints and staff shortages that pervade the library field may be able to fund teen library assistants if their job description allows for at least some substitution for existing page positions.

The LEAP program is currently funded by the City of Philadelphia as a part of the general library budget, with the exception of the Associate Leader positions and the annual Youth Empowerment Summit, which are privately funded. Fiscal year (FY) 2003 was, however, the first year in which all of the fifty-four LEAP branches were funded by the city. When the program began in 1989, it was based exclusively on private funding from the William Penn Foundation and other foundations. The city began funding LEAP in FY 2000, providing money to operate it in twelve branches. This number was increased to forty-one branches in FY 2001, forty-six branches in FY 2002, and all fifty-four branches in FY 2003. Other major private grants were also received as LEAP grew. During 1999-2000, for example, a \$500,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation helped to fund LEAP in every branch five afternoons a week. And, during 1997-2000, the William Penn Foundation provided \$1 million to fund the Bits and Bytes program, which was subsequently incorporated into LEAP in the form of the Teen Library Assistant positions. As we discuss further below, LEAP provides a good case study of how public libraries may—at least within certain community contexts—be able to sustain large homework help programs with youth employment components by using private funding to leverage increased local public financing.

In contrast to King County, Tucson, and Philadelphia, the bulk of PASS! funding is not written into the Oakland library budget. As described in Box 5, as of FY 2003 over half of program funding was provided by private grants raised by the Oakland Library Foundation. (A volunteer group called the “PASS! Partners” raised an additional \$30,000 to \$40,000 annually by means of a benefit dinner.) Almost one-third was provided by a \$175,000 grant from the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, a public grant-making entity administered by the City of Oakland.²³ Beginning in FY 2003, the library budget covered the PASS! Coordinator’s salary, which represents the remaining 13 percent of program costs. According to senior administrators and program staff, the fact that PASS! remains so reliant on private fundraising has been difficult for the program. Although the library has attempted to address this problem by including the PASS! Coordinator’s position in the library budget, senior administrators would like the program to receive more city funding.

²³ The Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) was established in November 1996, when over three-fourths of the city voters passed the Kids First! Initiative, which directed the city to set aside 2.5 percent of its unrestricted General Purpose Fund to fund direct services to children and youth. (This measure stays in effect for 12 years, through 2008.) As of 2001, this generated about \$6 million per year. In 2000, PASS! received the maximum possible grant of \$200,000. The following year, it again received the maximum amount, which had been lowered to \$175,000. In 2003, PASS! again received the maximum of \$175,000.

Funding Considerations I: Public Sources

Local Government

Although there is no sure formula for leveraging local government funding for teen employment programs, the experience of Oakland, Philadelphia, and other PLPYD libraries provides some insight as to what might help or hinder this goal. Of course, many of the factors that determine the level of such support are beyond the library's control, such as the governance structure of the library, the state of the regional economy, the nature of the local political administration, and the focus of its larger policy agenda. There are, however, ways in which libraries can position themselves to have a better chance of capitalizing on any funding opportunities that may develop.

In Oakland, for example, one top-level manager explained that although the library would "like to see the city support us more strongly out of their regular budget," until recently it had not had the leadership necessary to make a compelling case to the city. "The leadership has been moderate," she explained. "It takes strong leadership to raise awareness." In Philadelphia, in contrast, senior administrators noted that those in a leadership position were careful to develop and maintain relationships with top city officials, as well as with city service staff in charge of important social programs. One manager who had been involved with LEAP since its inception explained that she pays close attention to developments in the city government that might affect the program. She said: "Part of my job is knowing what's happening in the city."

Of course, in many cases even the most well-coordinated efforts may not succeed in leveraging funding for library programs. One senior administrator in Brooklyn, for example, explained that the Brooklyn Public Library, Queens Library, and New York Public Library are careful to lobby together for funds and package initiatives for political appeal. Nonetheless, she added: "Sometimes the proposal can be on the table for years and years before it goes through." As this example suggests, public libraries need to stay in the game for the long haul, maintaining political connections and looking for opportunities to procure funding as they present themselves.

Programs that clearly relate both to the mission of the library and the needs of the local community are easier to sell. One senior director in Philadelphia recalled:

We were just lucky with [LEAP] that when the mayor came in, after-school programs were his theme song. It was easy for us to show what we had been doing all these years and ask, 'So if this is important to you, can you fund it?' . . . So we had to sell it to the city, but it's easy to do that when you've had such success with the program and can see where it fits into the library's mission and the good of the city.

Similarly, one senior director in King County explained that something like the Library Page Fellowship program "would only work in a city if it met the political priorities of the city council, because it costs money to do something that is not a direct library service. So, it has to meet some larger need: to keep kids off the streets, reduce crime, etc." (On the other hand, one senior administrator in Oakland wryly noted: "The city loves the PASS! program, but they also love that they don't have to fund a lot of it.")

As one senior director in King County pointed out, the location and governing structure of many public libraries may prevent them from having access to any significant source of local public funding for youth programs:

King County is wealthy enough that it can take on nontraditional programs and roles. Other counties do not have that same sort of flexibility or opportunity. In a small county, without the tax base and not having the city to go to increase funds, these types of programs may be impossible to do.

Even when significant local government funding for library youth programs is obtained, it may have constraints that are difficult to work with. In Philadelphia, for example, when the library obtained city funding for LEAP staff, it had to conform to the city's employment policies for those positions. Consequently, LEAP had to discontinue the practice of employing public-school teachers as After-School Leaders, and it had to recruit and train new staff to replace them. In addition, city funding does not support training, so other sources of funding are required to maintain program quality. Senior administrators are also mindful that the flow of city funding may be turned off. They explained: "LEAP happens to be in good shape right now because the city administration loves it. That's wonderful, but that's not always the case. And you have to be willing to deal with that."

State Government

Neither King County, Oakland, Philadelphia, nor Tucson received state monies for their youth employment programs. Mediavilla (2001) notes, however, that both state and local government bodies may support library-based homework help programs through various grant opportunities, including funding earmarked for preventing juvenile delinquency and other "prevention" funds. Currently, however, at least forty states face major budget crises, which is having a negative impact on state-based library funding (Hennen, 2003).

Federal Government

During 2002-2003, Philadelphia received money from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) job training program to fund approximately twenty Teen Library Assistants in the LEAP program. This arrangement formed a part of a larger contract between the federal WIA program and the Philadelphia Youth Network, which placed low-income teens in positions in LEAP, city recreation centers, and an arts center. After the library had been involved with this program for 3 years, the City of Philadelphia asked them to become the direct contractor for WIA funds. The library consequently wrote a proposal to administer them, which was accepted. Consequently, the library became the home of the Youth Leadership After School Program (YLASP), which provides mentoring and training for teens employed through WIA funding.

The city asked the library to administer this citywide program, which demonstrates the leadership role it has forged for itself with regard to youth issues in the community. Although this development cannot be solely attributed to the decision to make the Teen Library Assistant program a central component of LEAP, there can be little doubt that it was an important factor. The fact that LEAP employs 150 teens has helped make the library the largest single employer of

youth in the city. And the fact that the library has devoted the attention and resources necessary to create a strong, system wide training program for both youth and staff makes it a logical home for the YLASP program.

As Mediavilla (2001) notes, the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) has provided start-up money for many library-based after-school homework help programs throughout the country. In most states, LSTA monies are administered through the state library, which awards grants on an annual, competitive basis. However, LSTA funds are typically earmarked for pilot projects and cannot be used to support the same program for more than 1 to 2 years.

Federal Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) may, depending on the jurisdiction, be used to improve library facilities and/or hire staff for youth programs. These grants are typically administered at city and county levels, and target low-income and blighted neighborhoods in need of improved local services. Of the PLYD libraries, Tucson has received CDBG money, although not specifically for the Computer Aide Program.

Funding Considerations II: Private Sources

Library Foundations

Although public libraries get the bulk of their funding from local government, special programs are typically funded through private donations. Most homework help programs, for example, exist solely thanks to external private funding sources. Although a few have become fully integrated into the library's budget, in general, "acquiring the resources to adequately staff and equip the homework center is an ongoing exercise that continually tests librarians' fund-raising and community relations skills" (Mediavilla, 2001). In response to such situations, public libraries have increasingly created their own library foundations to engage in private fundraising. (Unlike the vast majority of public libraries, library foundations have the 501(c)(3) status necessary to engage in fundraising under federal law.)

Of the four youth employment programs featured in this section, Oakland's Library Foundation has done by far the most to generate funding for it. Senior administrators report, however, that although the Foundation has been successful in raising money for PASS!, fundraising has been and remains a struggle. The Foundation's strategy has been to obtain a number of small (\$5,000-\$10,000) grants from local foundations. Although funders have been supportive of the program, obtaining the necessary quantity of small grant money requires a lot of effort. In 2001, for example, the Foundation obtained \$400,000 for PASS! from forty-two different funders.

Not surprisingly, Oakland Foundation staff report that they "always panic every year" trying to find a sufficient number of funders for the program. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that the longer the program is in existence, the harder it is to raise money for it. As a general rule, foundations do not like to fund the same program year after year. One senior administrator stated that she believes that PASS! needs to come up with a "new twist" in order to continue to attract funding. Similarly, high-level staff in Philadelphia reported that although they

often pilot new programs using money raised by their library foundation, city funding must be tapped in order to sustain them on a long-term basis.

Senior staff in both Philadelphia and Oakland praised the flexibility of funding generated by their library foundations, contrasting it with the rigid constraints that often accompany public monies. One administrator in Oakland also noted that “having people that know how to sell (the library) really helps.” One staff member in Philadelphia, however, explained that it had been a “ten-year process” before LEAP administrators were able to work easily with the development office. Because funding for LEAP is regularly in flux, program administrators want development staff to ask funders if grant monies can be reallocated on an “as needed” basis. (For example, if a grant was provided to fund teens at a certain number of branches, and LEAP subsequently received money from the city for the same purpose, LEAP administrators would want the grant money to be redirected for other purposes.) Although program and development staff now have a good working relationship, this required some effort on both sides to develop.

Private, Corporate, and Community Foundations

Interviews conducted with staff at PLPYD libraries yielded additional information regarding the pros and cons of attempting to fund programs through grants from private, corporate, and community foundations. Again, a common theme was that although such private monies are important for piloting new initiatives, it is difficult to sustain programs with them. On one hand, as a senior administrator in Philadelphia explained: “It’s the beauty of private money that you can try out new things and find out what works.” Foundations like to fund innovative programs that promise to have a positive impact on the institution and the surrounding community. However, foundations tend to change their funding priorities regularly and are reluctant to pick up and continue what another funder has started. In addition, they generally do not like to provide general operating expenses, which the institution typically needs to sustain a program. (Although smaller community foundations are most willing to fund operating expenses, they also have less money to give.)

In Brooklyn, one senior development officer explained that the library tracks funding trends in the foundation sector and attempts to match them to the library’s programmatic interests:

Often enough, there is a match between the two because what foundations and corporations are interested in, funding represents a certain zeitgeist in the non-profit world that our staff people are concerned with as well. Wallace is a good example of that. The fact that Wallace got involved with this teen initiative meshed beautifully with the fact that we at the library were thinking the same thoughts. Well, that is not just coincidental; it’s because that is what’s out there right now.

In Charlotte, a development officer stated that he believed that corporate foundations are the most promising source of private funding for library youth programs at the current time, particularly if they are headquartered in the region.

In Philadelphia, senior administrators emphasized that when libraries solicit funding to develop new programs, they should attempt to start their initiative on a scale that is large enough to generate impressive results. The library, they explained, does not generally believe in piloting

programs in only three or four of their fifty-four branches. Rather, they like to start off with about one-third of them involved. The goal is to make a new program small enough to handle, but “big enough to matter.” Otherwise, the worry is that they “are not going to get any results worth the investment.” Given that potential funders (including the city) will want to see evidence of a program’s worth, starting off with a relatively ambitious agenda is seen as a means of leveraging future funding.

Friends of the Library

Many public libraries have Friends of the Library groups that raise money to help out with special programs and provide volunteer support. Oakland has a particularly strong Friends group, with 600 to 800 dues-paying members who raise about \$55,000 annually for library programs. Because the mission of the group is to enhance library services, it will fund youth programs or special collections, but not staff or regular collections. This suggests that although Friends groups are unlikely to provide funding for teen staff positions, they may be able to contribute to youth training or other special program needs.

Community Organizations, Local Businesses, and Schools

Although community organizations, local businesses, and schools typically do not represent major sources of funding, they can play an important role in publicizing programs, providing in-kind support, donating materials, soliciting volunteers, and contributing some funds for designated purposes. Library-based homework help programs, for example, have worked with a local McDonalds to distribute fliers; received equipment donations from a professional sports team to be used as program incentives; and had technology companies provide computers and computer support (Mediavilla, 2000). In Philadelphia, senior administrators report that they work to promote LEAP by developing relationships with local schools and community, professional, and youth-serving organizations. They said: “We’re always presenting, we’re always involved in committees . . . we represent the library so that LEAP can be represented.” In addition to strengthening the position of the program in the community, such organizational networking allows LEAP administrators to learn about many funding opportunities by word-of-mouth. In some cases, the program has been able to develop its own sponsors. For example, the library found an anonymous private donor willing to fund the annual LEAP youth summit for \$20,000 per year after the Wallace grant ended.

Lesson and Implications

Library-based youth employment programs have the potential to provide valuable developmental experiences for participating youth. They also offer important benefits to libraries, particularly in terms of strengthening their connection to local constituencies and their standing in the broader community. They also have the potential to diversify staff in ethnically diverse communities. However, youth employment programs are very costly for public libraries to run. In addition to the expense of youth salaries, high-quality programs need to have some dedicated program staff, involve additional library staff, and provide regular staff and youth trainings. Covering such costs requires a substantial investment on the part of the library, as well as a high level of dedicated financial support. For most libraries, this requires either a budgetary

commitment from local government and/or intensive fundraising efforts. Given that both approaches to financing require strong library leadership and administration, youth employment programs are most appropriate for institutions that have sufficient internal strength to develop and maintain a high degree of support from both public and private sources.

SECTION III. INITIATIVE IMPACT

Chapter 6

IMPACT OF PLPYD: YOUTH

There are several components of youth programs and work experiences that are likely to foster learning and development. These include positive relationships with adults and peers, interesting activities, opportunities for youth to explore identity and take initiative, and activities that encourage connections with family, school, and community. Although most of the research findings to date show correlations rather than cause and effect, they suggest that participation in youth development programs can have positive impacts on interpersonal skills, school attendance and work habits, and aspirations for higher education (Larson, 2000; Larson & et al, 2003; Larson, Hansen, & Walker, in press; Larson, et al., in press; National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), 2003)

As we discussed in Chapter 3, our analysis of the quality of the PLPYD programs indicated that most of the programs provided some, if not all, of the characteristics of high-quality youth programs. Positive relationships with adult leaders and other staff stood out in youth reports as one factor that was critical to maintaining youth participation. The library youth programs initially attracted teens by offering them interesting and fun activities, a chance to serve others, and monetary incentives. Once they were recruited, their relationships with program and library staff and their peers, as well as the quality of their activities, kept them involved. Other important factors included flexibility in program scheduling and family support.

In this chapter, we turn to the question of the benefits of the PLPYD experiences for youth participants. We investigated the potential benefits of the library youth programs through three different methods. Most importantly, we interviewed 105 youth participants in years two and three about their experiences. We also interviewed program staff and librarians who worked with youth for their perceptions of the changes they observed in youth that might be attributed to the Initiative. In addition, in the summer of 2002, near the end of the implementation phase, we administered a survey of youth who had been recorded as participants in the Initiative between January 2001 and June 2002 (see Box 7).

Youth participants in the PLPYD Initiative were involved in a wide range of activities that included training and jobs using computer technology, experiences to build personal and social skills, educational support and career development activities, business skills/training and practice in helping children with homework and adults with library resources, and community service outside the library. The goal of these programs was two fold: to foster the development of individual youth and to strengthen the capacity of public libraries to provide high-quality youth development and employment programs. This chapter examines the impact of the PLPYD programs on youth participants. The next chapter describes the impacts of PLPYD on the participating libraries and communities.

An analysis of interviews and surveys with youth and adult participants, as well as program observations, showed first that the PLPYD programs provided contexts for

Box 7. Selected Youth Survey Results, 2002

During the summer of 2002, a mail survey was sent to 502 teens who had been recorded as participants in PLPYD activities between January 2001 and June 2002. The final response rate, after follow-ups of a second mailing and selected telephone interviews, was 234 teens, or 46%. The response rates from individual sites ranged from 39% to 66%. Given the response rate, we cannot assume that this sample is representative of the range of youth who participated in PLPYD during the second and third years of the Initiative. (It is possible that youth who responded to the survey were more favorable toward their PLPYD experiences than youth who did not respond.) However, their responses complement what was learned from individual interviews with youth.

As Table 17 indicates, 68% of this sample were girls, a somewhat higher percentage than the 59% found in PLPYD participants as a whole. A majority (70%) of the respondents were in high school. They reported that most often, they learned about PLPYD programs either through a staff person at the library or a friend. When asked about the importance of various reasons for becoming involved, 78% selected as "very important" the following reasons, "I wanted to learn new skills" and "It would help me in the future to get a job or go to college." In contrast, "I wanted to earn money" was a very important reason for 56% and "I enjoy being in the library" was selected by less than half, or 47%. About a third (35%) said "I wanted to have something to do after school" was very important, and only a small percentage chose as very important reasons, "I wanted to spend time with friends" (18%) and "I wanted to spend time with adults" (9%).

Table 17. 2002 Youth Survey Respondents

	<i>% of Youth (n=234)</i>
Gender	
Male	32
Female	68
Ethnicity	
Black/African-American	39
White	18
Hispanic/Latino	15
Asian	11
Multi-racial/other	17
Grade	
6-8	8
9-10	29
11-12	41
Post-high school	22
Length of time in PLPYD	
Less than 6 months	23
6 months to 1 year	25
1-2 years	27
More than 2 years	25

At the time of the survey, about half of the respondents had been involved with their library's Initiative for less than a year, and the other half for a year or longer. At this point, a little more than half (53%) of the sample were still involved. Among the 47% no longer involved, half said the primary reason for leaving was that their PLPYD activity, job, or community service was completed. Other prominent reasons included having too little time, other after-school activities, home responsibilities, too much homework, or, in some cases, transportation problems. Only a small percentage (6%) said they had left because of dissatisfaction with their PLPYD program.

Overall, 73% reported that they enjoyed their experiences "very much," and 26% said they enjoyed them "somewhat." There was some variability in these responses among the nine sites, suggesting both programmatic differences and differences in implementation, since responses of youth involved in similar types of programs also varied.

In addition, a somewhat higher percentage of teens who had been involved with their library activities for a year or longer (78%) reported that they enjoyed their experiences "very much" than teens who had been involved for less than a year (67%). At least three-fourths of the sample agreed that their PLPYD experiences were interesting and fun, made them feel like they were important members of a group, gave them a chance to express their ideas, and gave them an opportunity to be leaders. Three-fourths also reported that they had good relationships with adults in the library. Again, a somewhat higher percentage of teens who had been involved for a year or longer indicated agreement with these items than teens who had been involved for less than a year. For example, 70% of youth who had been involved for less than a year agreed with the statement "I felt like I was an important member of a group" compared with 92% of youth who had been involved for longer than a year.

Other specific outcomes are presented in Table 18.

Table 18. Impact of PLPYD, 2002 Youth Survey

	<i>% of Youth "Agree/Strongly Agree"</i>
I have learned new skills	82
I feel better about my future	75
I know more about the public library	74
I know more about different career options	69
I have higher goals for my education after high school	67
I use the library more often than before	67
I have better relationships with adults	57
I manage my time better	54
I feel better about my neighborhood and community	50
I am doing better in school	49
I have better relationships with friends	48
I have more interest in a library Career	33

Among other findings, 51% said they and other teens have helped to improve materials or spaces for teens at the library, and 33% said they were "not sure." Forty-eight percent believed that teen involvement in library activities had a positive effect on how staff treat teens in the library. Only 25% thought their experiences with the library had changed how their friends use the library. When asked how often they could find books and other materials that interest them at their public libraries, 55% said "most of the time" and 38% said "sometimes."

Finally, when asked for suggestions to improve their public libraries, youth most often suggested the following: better selection of books and other materials, better space for teens, more computers, and more teen activities and programs.

a range of developmental experiences for youth. Although we were not able to measure changes in teens over time that might be directly attributable to their PLPYD experiences, we do have evidence that *they* perceived their experiences to be beneficial. Furthermore, program coordinators and library staff who worked with the teens also reported a range of benefits for youth, particularly increased self-confidence, sense of responsibility, self-esteem, and a desire to be successful. Staff noticed improvements in peer relationships as well as relationships with adults. PLPYD activities were associated with experiences related to initiative, decision-making, emotional learning, developing social skills, and forming connections with community members. The findings also suggest that different types of youth programs and jobs were associated with different experiences and benefits. Homework help and computer assistance programs, for example, appeared to be especially satisfactory contexts for experiences related to the development of prosocial norms (e.g., service to others), and links to the community.

Second, youth and staff perceived a wide range of benefits of these experiences for youth, which included learning specific skills (e.g., technology), developing qualities such as patience and perseverance, and experiencing feelings of acceptance and belonging. Although positive experiences far outweighed negative ones, some jobs and programs also held the “potential for negative experiences” (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003) (p. 5), such as conflicts with patrons and activities that were repetitive and tedious.

“I think they leave with something. How to judge it? I guess that would come on [their own] evaluations. But I notice progress. Self esteem, even becoming more dependable, more conscientious of the time, coming to work on time; if something comes up, how to call if you're not going to be there; taking responsibility for your own actions, knowing that this is how the real world works if you are in an employment environment, a taste of it anyway The two young people I had during the summer if I could find part-time employment they would be the first ones I would hire.”
~Branch manager

The extent to which they perceived benefits from their experiences appeared to be shaped partly by how long and how intensely they have been involved. Teens who had taken part in regularly scheduled jobs such as homework helpers or computer assistants for several months or longer were more likely to report benefits than those who have been involved for shorter periods or in less frequent activities. In addition, teens who had been regular volunteers or users of the library before becoming involved in PLPYD were more apt to report positive effects than other teens for whom their PLPYD job or activity was their first substantial experience with the library.

“They really enjoy being with the group. They are starting to open up. A [youth] was a regular patron, and very introverted. I never saw him laugh. I've seen him come out a lot, and he's a comedian. B's an only child and was very critical. She's learning how to agree to disagree. C is shy, but he is starting to share some ideas and give his input. Before, you wouldn't hear anything ... Two [7th grade] boys were trying to be in gangs, and I put them on probation ... This is their first day back. They had to make a choice, this program or that. When they were on probation, they called me everyday, left messages, and told me about their progress. They are doing better.”
~PLPYD program coordinator

Youth described a range of different areas in which they gained skills and knowledge and developed attributes through their PLPYD experiences. These skills, knowledge, and attributes fell into three different, but overlapping, categories: (1) personal development, (2) social/interpersonal development, and (3) expanding horizons. Major themes that emerged most often are discussed below.

Personal Development

Cognitive and Academic Skills

About half (49%) of the youth who responded to the 2002 survey reported that they were “doing better in school” as a result of PLPYD (see Table 20 in Box 7). A number of youth who we interviewed also said their work at the library helped improve their grades or academic skills. They either learned skills about organizing their time, studying, or test-taking through their

“I was interested in the program because [the coordinator] was talking about meeting new people and accomplishing things and realizing what we really stand for, succeeding basically. My grades went up a lot when I got into the group I didn't have any excuse not to have my homework done when I got home. I'm at the library so it took my grades up real high.”

~16-year-old boy

training and work, or were required as part of their job to maintain a certain grade point average. For example, in Charlotte, teens needed a C average to begin the program and were expected to raise their GPA slightly each semester to remain in the program; this emphasis on academics along with the supervisor's attention to academic skills as part of their training undoubtedly contributed to this finding. A few of the Storytelling-To-Go youth said their work at the library helped them improve their grades or academic skills. One 13-year-old boy said Storytelling-To-Go has helped him with reading and spelling words. He said he used to stumble on words, but since

he began working in Storytelling-To-Go, reading is “really easy.” We also were impressed during one of our program visits to Charlotte when a 13-year-old boy who had been described as having difficulty with reading offered to read aloud a speech he was writing to an unfamiliar adult.

A few of the Baltimore youth also said they have gained academic skills through their work at the library, which included providing homework help to children in the library, journal-writing, and, for some, doing research and writing about historical figures in preparation for a mural project. Staff at many of the sites allowed and encouraged youth to take time off from their work at the library during exam periods.

Computer/Technical Skills

Given the emphasis on technology in the PLPYD jobs and training, it is not surprising that youth frequently said they learned computer skills as a result of their work at the library. At two sites, youth highlighted learning how to take apart and put together a computer as a feature of their training. Besides computer skills, many youth also said they gained other technical skills. For example, youth in Charlotte mentioned being able to operate a variety of machinery used for copying and designing. One youth proudly asserted that he knew as much as the employees at Kinko's and thought he could easily get a job there if he desired. Youth involved in the Spanish Dial-A-Story program worked intensively with a recording studio to develop their tapes.

Teaching Skills and Patience

The Washoe County Wizards, Philadelphia LEAP, Fort Bend Tech Teens, Oakland PASS!, and King County Techno Teens youth said they have gained teaching skills and learned how to work

with children and adults through their work at the library. The majority of these youth also said they have learned patience through their teaching experiences at the library. They felt able to cope well with the occasional frustration and negative behaviors from children and adult patrons they encountered. A 15-year-old boy in a computer assistance program described his experiences as follows:

[In my job] I help patrons find books and find [information] with the computers Some people want you to do it for them because they don't really care if you do it. Then I have some patrons that say, 'Well tell me how to do it and I'll figure it out.' So you have to have patience with some of those who get mad at you We have had training on it and we have had discussions on that. It helps a lot so I think without the training I'd be a little more hot-headed about how I treat some of the patrons.

"It's important to have patience and communication skills. Some customers think it's the computer's fault, and you want to tell them the computer doesn't make mistakes, it's the people. But you really can't. You want to be able to talk with them on a one-on-one basis to get things out in an easy way. It's funny, sometimes people talk to patrons in a tech kind of way. They use technology terms and the people are like, 'What? Just fix my problem.' Good communication skills help you know when to talk tech and talk regular to the patrons."
~16-year-old girl

Speaking Skills and Self-Confidence

Youth involved in presentation activities, such as the Spanish Dial-A-Story and Storytelling-To-Go programs in Washoe County, and some of the youth advisory groups, felt they had gained or expected to gain speaking skills through their work at the library. Many of these youth also said they found their activities to be a forum for self-expression and had gained self-confidence, which is most likely related to their new speaking skills. A 12-year-old youth in the Storytelling-To-Go program said:

"I've seen kids just really mature, accept responsibility graciously, and I've seen their self-esteem go out of the roof. They are so proud of themselves. A lot of them really weren't aware that they had the ability. This has really helped them to understand that they really can do anything that they want to do. I think it's wonderful."
~PLPYD Community Partner

At our 6th grade talent show, I like had to stop in the middle of it because I didn't like standing in front of a whole bunch of people. And now it's really easy because we've learned about how to tell stories and the basics for not blanking out it's helped me stand up in front of a crowd without being nervous.

Program and library staff also frequently observed that teens they worked with had gained self-confidence in their abilities to express their ideas and work with peers and adults.

Sense of Importance

Many youth across the sites expressed the feeling that their library positions made them feel important. They sensed, and were told by their supervisors, that they were providing a real service to library staff and patrons and making a contribution. The LEAP youth expressed a strong sense of importance from working in the library, sometimes contrasting their library job with the jobs of friends who work in fast-food or retail enterprises. Perhaps because LEAP youth can be promoted and "move up" through the ranks, this sense of importance may be intensely fostered. The Tucson Computer Aides believed they

"When the authors came to the library, and the lady in charge of the event was trying to show me and two other members of the advisory group what to do. She said 'I need a person at the door, I need a person giving out fliers, I need a person doing the chairs,' and so on. She had us doing six activities, and we only had three people. So I felt really important and accepted."
~17-year-old girl

were fulfilling a need that is important to the library—helping patrons with the computer. This real need provided authenticity in their employment experience that allowed them to feel valued and important.

Responsibility and Organizational Skills

In the 2002 youth survey, 54 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement “I manage my time better” as a result of their PLPYD experiences (see Table 20). In interviews as well, many youth said they learned how to be more responsible as a result of their work at the library, for example, showing up on time and calling the library to let them know if they cannot come to work. Youth involved in homework help and computer assistance programs, in particular, said they learned how to better organize their time as a result of their work at the library. An 18-year-old youth in the LEAP program reported:

The [project staff] are trying to work on me, they call it ‘positive youth development.’ They’re trying to get me to be more organized and improve on my follow-up, so I can be a better supervisor They’re doing pretty good [at it]. I’m a lot more organized than I was.

Sense of Accomplishment

Youth gained a sense of accomplishment in many ways. One way was helping people and seeing that their help had made an impact—seeing a child figure out a math problem, or having an adult express appreciation for the completion of a task or a newly learned computer skill. Teens also gained a sense of accomplishment when they had a product to show for their work, as in the Washoe County Storytelling-To-Go and Spanish Dial-A-Story programs. Teens involved in Tucson’s Library Subcommittee in planning the new teen area at the Central Library were fully engaged and excited about the project as long as they could see progress being made—orders placed for carpeting and furnishings, for example—but less enthusiastic when there were long delays in receiving materials and construction. Although it might often be true that “the process is more important than the product,” a product might be useful in order to engage the youth in a process.

“Helping the kids [gives me a sense of accomplishment]. I don’t like a boring job that you just sit there, doing paperwork. But if I’m up running around to keep my energy as well as having fun in doing it, it feels like I’m accomplishing something each day. Sometimes after school I’m like, ‘Oh, I’m ready for bed.’ But as soon as I get here, I’m up.”

~18-year-old boy

Finally, youth also reported they gained a sense of accomplishment from participating in ceremonies and celebrations that some staff held to mark the end of a training or a program year, and in other public events and publicity that recognized them for their work in the library or the community.

Increased Financial Resources

As noted earlier, for a number of teens, the chance to earn money was part of their initial motivation to become involved, but in time, most maintained that they would participate in PLPYD activities without pay. Still, for a few youth, it remained a primary motivation. And for some youth, even the modest pay afforded them a new degree of independence from parents, and in some cases took pressure away from their family to cover everyday expenses such as clothing

and school lunches. According to a 16-year-old girl: “I feel more responsible now that I don’t have to always go to my parents and ask for it. It’s like it’s my own. I feel more responsible.”

Social/Interpersonal Development

In the 2002 youth survey, 57 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement “I have better relationships with adults” as a result of PLPYD, and 48 percent agreed with “I have better relationships with friends.” Major themes related to social/interpersonal development that emerged in interviews with youth were the following:

Teamwork

Youth in a wide variety of programs—homework help, youth advisory councils, community service, Spanish Dial-A-Story, and Storytelling-To-Go—reported that they had learned how to work in a group as a result of their job at the library. In the words of one 18-year-old: “Teamwork is something I’ve never been really good at. But now I realize it’s okay if I give up a little responsibility and let some people do other things.” Youth in youth advisory groups noted in particular that in order to benefit from the experience, one has to like being a contributing member of a group. Youth said members need to be able to give their input and listen to others in order to be successful members of the group. Staff also observed improved peer relationships: for example, a branch manager commented: “I’ve seen changes in how they show respect for and address one another.”

Helping and Mentoring Others

In contrast to some stereotypes about teenagers, youth at all of the PLPYD sites believed they were helping other people through their work at the library, which made them feel good and enjoy their job. As we described above, many of these youth also expressed a strong sense of accomplishment when helping others. All of the Spanish Dial-A-Story youth expressed a sincere commitment to help the Hispanic community. An Oakland PASS! mentor reported that her motivation for helping others stems from an acknowledgment that she did not have any programs like PASS! when she was younger, but would have wanted one. She said she likes helping and being a PASS! mentor “because I never did have help from other people so I’m taking this opportunity to help these kids.”

Some youth talked about themselves as being “at risk” or living in a low-income environment with few resources. This contributed to their motivation to serve others as well as prove themselves deserving of better environments. A teen in Charlotte told us that he imagined that when others heard the name of the PLPYD program “Teens Succeed!” “The first thing that might pop up into their head is teens succeeding, and that would never happen because nobody really cares about Black teens.” An Oakland youth said: “Everyone is always saying, ‘The inner city kids are bad,’ and they don’t see all the good things that youth do, like being in the PASS! program.” Another Oakland PASS! mentor said: “That’s why I decided to stick with this—because everybody want to talk about how everything is so bad, but don’t nobody want to pitch in and help out.”

A Fort Bend Tech Teen said she likes her job because she is making kids feel better about themselves and making a difference in their lives. She said: “Some people don’t think they can do anything in this life just because of the environment they live in.” She said half of the kids in her environment will drop out of school by age 18, and she wants to help. She said: “Anything is possible for children,” and tells the children she is working with that it “doesn’t matter what community they live in, they can still be what they want to be.” One of the Oakland youth discussed how she mentors kids in the homework help program. She said her work with children helps them to know: “[I]t’s not as hard as you think. It will be hard, but it’s going to get better, it’s always worth it.” She said she tells the children: “There is always going to be somebody there whether it seems like it or not. There is always somebody there.”

Sense of Belonging and Acceptance

A majority of the youth expressed that their participation in the library youth programs gave them a sense of belonging or acceptance. Feeling accepted or a member of a group is often sought by youth of this age. These feelings were reported by youth participating in a wide variety of programs—homework help programs, computer assistance positions, youth advisory groups, and the Copy and Design Center in Charlotte. They tended to be reported more often by youth who had been together for an extended period of time. For example, youth in the Wizards program in Washoe County were together for 8 months during their training and often helped each other with their questions during those months. Some LEAP youth in Philadelphia referred to people at the library as their “second family.” It is likely that the longevity of the LEAP program and the amount of time per week youth spend in LEAP, including regular branch team meetings with adult staff, helped to create this strong sense of belonging.

Expanding Horizons

The 2002 youth survey pointed to several areas related to youths’ awareness of and feelings about the future. Three-fourths said they agreed with the statement “I feel better about my future” and two-thirds with “I have higher goals for my education after high school” as a result of their participation in PLYD activities (see Table 20).

Meeting New People

The majority of PLYD youth said that meeting other teens is a big benefit of working at the library. One of the Washoe County Youth Advisory Council members recalled:

When we [first] got together we were very unsure of each other. It’s not just diverse in poor and rich. It’s, there’s Black and white and there’s some Asian people. Every race and whatever. Everybody’s here, you know. We’re all together and we realize you know, I don’t think there’s a single prejudiced person in our group. We all make friends with everybody that’s here. It’s a nice thing.

Travel

Just as staff appreciated the opportunity to network with staff of other PLYD projects and visit other library systems, youth also reported the opportunity to travel to other cities was an

important benefit of their PLPYD experience. For youth who did travel, this opportunity gave them a sense that they were part of a bigger world as well as a larger purpose that went beyond their experiences in their local library. Several of the Brooklyn youth expressed how much they liked going to Albany to meet their senator and talk about the library's programs. Charlotte youth discussed how they went on "exploration trips" to Atlanta and Myrtle Beach. Youth who attended or gave presentations at professional library meetings and annual Youth Leadership Conferences facilitated by the Urban Libraries Council in Chicago, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., believed they gained new skills in public speaking, more self-confidence, and new friendships from these experiences.

Changes in Perceptions of Library

Not all, but a majority of youth stated that they view the library differently than they did before they worked at the library. Youth said they now know more about the resources at the library, have a "behind the scenes" view of the library, have a greater appreciation for a librarian's job, view librarians as more friendly, have dispelled negative stereotypes about librarians, and see the library as a place they can be social and have fun—instead of as quiet and boring. A youth in Philadelphia said working at the library changed her view of the library:

It gets me a more behind-the-scenes look of what actually goes on when things are being planned and how things are run. I can remember a lot of the times I attended some of the programs that were put on by LEAP [when I was younger] and I would say, "Wow this is wonderful." And I would leave with my little bag of candy, and be happy. But now when I realize how much planning goes into it, I have a lot more appreciation of the things that go on in the library.

A teen in Washoe County reported: "When I was little, librarians were scary old women who told everybody to be quiet, and I have learned that that is not necessarily the case I think there are a lot more people that are friendly now."

Because our evidence is based on a limited sample and self-reports, it is not clear whether changed *perceptions* of the library actually changed teens *use* of the library, although, as we will discuss in the next chapter, there is some indication that the presence of teens working in the library made some branches feel more welcoming to other teens. Two-thirds of youth participants who responded to a survey in 2002 reported that as a result of their PLPYD experience they "know more about the library" and "use the library more often than before" (see Table 20 in Box 7). Some youth mentioned they had fallen away from reading but had gone back to it because books were very accessible when they worked at the library. A teen parent mentioned that she checked out books more often than in the past to read to her daughter. But more often than not, teens did not indicate they had increased their use of the library, or used it in significantly different ways except for work, than they had in the past.

Future Aspirations

Reflecting the broad goal of PLPYD to expose low-income youth to new educational and career possibilities, some youth also reported that their work at the library made them more aware of what they wanted to do in the future. For other youth, their work at the library made

"Being a Tech Teen got me involved with working with different people and working with computers and learning new things, so maybe that will help me out in the future."

~16-year-old girl

them realize what they do not want to do in the future. For some youth, their work at the library simply encouraged them to think about their future. Some youth also recognized that they were learning skills that would transfer to their future desired careers, even when those careers were not the exact job they were doing at the library.

Some youth related how their job at the library had either confirmed a future career aspiration or exposed them to a new, interesting career. Although youth across the nine sites expressed interest in a variety of future careers, many youth said they want to work in a computer-related job. In fact, all of the Fort Bend youth who discussed their future said they want to work in the computer field, sometimes among other careers, as well. The most popular future career LEAP and Wizards youth said they are considering is something in the computer field. The Wizards, LEAP, and Fort Bend youth all worked on computers as part of their job at the library; thus, they were able to gain experience in and “confirm” their future desired career.

An Oakland youth said she wanted to be a PASS! mentor because she wants to be a teacher and thought working in the library would be a good opportunity to test that out. Working as a PASS! mentor helped her to realize her ability in handling children and “kind of proves” she could be a teacher in the future. Two girls working in a computer assistance program separately reported that they did not like computers before becoming involved in the program. One said she had wanted to be a nurse but now that she had learned more about computers, she was considering working with computers along with being a nurse. The other said before she worked at the library she wanted to be a physical therapist. However, now she would like a job in the computer field.

Working at the library encouraged some youth, who before working at the library had not considered a future career in the library field, to consider such a career. This included some of the participants in the Philadelphia LEAP, King County Techno Teens, and the Washoe County Wizards, Spanish Dial-A-Story, and Storytelling-To-Go programs. For example, one LEAP youth, who prior to working at the library was interested in a career in graphic design, said that because of her work at the library, she is considering a job in the library field in addition to graphic design. When asked if the library field is a future career direction, she said: “I would like to be in human resources [at the library]. Just being with the library I don’t care what it is—I would love it.” A few King County youth who had been involved in the program for an extended time discussed how much they had learned about the library system and the variety of different tasks they performed at the library. Although they were a small number, their views suggest that exposing youth to the library system might encourage them to pursue library careers.

For other youth, working at the library helped them realize what kind of work they do not want to do in the future. For example, a Wizard was interested in a career as a librarian before she began working at the library; however, after working as a Wizard, she is no longer interested in being a librarian. A LEAP youth said that through her work at the library, she has realized she “definitely” does not want to be a teacher, which is what she thought she wanted to be before she started working at the library. She said she likes the children and adults she teaches at the library but doesn’t think she would have the patience to do the job “on a day-to-day basis.”

Finally, some of the youth recognized that they learned skills that would transfer to their future desired careers, even when those careers were not the exact job they were doing at the library. For example, a Baltimore youth who worked in the CYC service learning program helping children with homework and other activities said she wanted to be a pediatrician and working in CYC had helped her learn how to talk to children. A Charlotte youth said the skills and experiences she had developed by working at the library, such as understanding people, being in challenging situations, problem-solving, record-keeping, and organization, would be helpful in her future job as a social worker.

In brief, perhaps even more important than specific career goals, the experience of working in a professional environment also appeared to have an impact on teens' self-image and perceptions of future possibilities. This was true especially for teens working in junior staff capacities, some of whom did not know people with advanced education other than schoolteachers. For youth who were serious about their futures but had had little exposure to role models or information about career development, PLPYD seemed to help clarify how further education could broaden the range of career options open to them.

Lessons and Implications

It is important to recognize that youth involved in the PLPYD Initiative were also participating in many other contexts—home and family, school and neighborhood—and, for many, church, sports, or other after-school activities. The behaviors and skills they were developing were influenced by experiences in all of these spheres, not just the PLPYD programs, as well as their own interests and needs. Thus, we cannot attribute the growth that they and others observed in their personal and interpersonal behaviors and in their awareness of new possibilities for their futures solely to their experiences with their public library jobs and programs. Further, our evidence is qualitative and descriptive and does not speak to any long-term impacts of PLPYD on youth. Nonetheless, youths' perceptions of their PLPYD experiences support the conclusion that the libraries were able to mount high-quality programs for low-income youth that provided opportunities for a range of outcomes.

In this chapter, we focused on the benefits youth attributed to their participation in the PLPYD programs as found through interviews with 105 participants and a survey of youth in the last year of the Initiative. Many of the personal and social benefits they perceived pertained to a wide variety of the PLPYD programs, including their sense of belonging and contributing to a group, self-confidence, and the satisfaction they felt in being able to help other people. It also appeared from interviews that youth involved in homework help programs especially enjoyed and learned more about working with young children, and youth working as computer aides and library assistants or as members of library advisory groups valued the recognition they received from librarians and patrons. For many teens, PLPYD activities seemed to be their first experience of working toward goals with adults who took them seriously as individuals and appreciated their contributions.

These findings suggest the following lessons regarding the outcomes for youth participating in library-based volunteer and employment programs.

- ***Library-based youth development and employment programs can provide a potentially wide range of benefits to teens in low-income communities.*** These benefits encompass personal and interpersonal behaviors and attitudes as well as specific job skills. The quality of the experiences and benefits reported by youth tended to be stronger for those who were engaged for longer periods of time.
- ***Different program activities provide contexts for different kinds of learning experiences.*** Still, the key to high-quality youth programs is the adult leader. Teens who participated in the PLYD Initiative talked more about their relationships with project and branch staff and the personal, social, and career skills they were developing than about other program aspects. And when teens were interested in a certain area—e.g., working with children, computers, public speaking or performance, and community service—it was enhanced by their relationships with adult leaders.

Chapter 7

IMPACT OF PLPYD: LIBRARIES AND COMMUNITIES

The PLPYD Initiative had many positive impacts on the participating library systems and the communities that they serve. These included new youth programs or the expansion of existing programs, new budgets and fundraising efforts for youth programs, new youth service staff positions, new understandings of teen abilities, improved staff attitudes toward youth service and professional training, making new use of youth development principles, more teen patrons, more community awareness of the library, and new leadership roles for the library in the community. With the exception of more positive attitudes toward working with youth among library staff, however, these outcomes varied widely among the sites. The primary reason for this lack of consistently positive outcomes was that many of the participating libraries did not use PLPYD funding to systematically build their capacity to sustain a more ambitious level of youth programming. Instead, much of the grant money was spent on short-term programs that, although they had positive impacts on individual participants, may not have left a solid institutional legacy.

In this section, we examine the impact of the PLPYD Initiative on participating library systems, both in terms of internal, institutional developments and external relations with the larger community. Lessons learned from the combined experience of the nine sites should be useful to all library systems that are interested in assessing their capacity to expand or enhance their current level of youth programming. The fact that the nine libraries experienced such a variety of outcomes with the PLPYD Initiative is instructive, because it reflects different levels of institutional capacity and experience with youth programming. Because the larger library field also encompasses such variety, comparing the varied experiences of the nine PLPYD sites is particularly useful.

Institutional Impacts

Three sets of institutional impacts were particularly important to consider in assessing the effect of the PLPYD Initiative on the nine library systems: the sustainability of the new or expanded youth programs funded by the grant, changes in staff attitudes toward teens and library youth programs, and the impact of youth development principles on the library system.

Sustainability of PLPYD-Funded Programs

Whether the particular programs or program enhancements implemented as part of the PLPYD Initiative were sustained after the grant ended is by no means the sole measure of the Initiative's success. Many of the positive results of the grant, such as the institution of new youth service staff positions, were not necessarily tied to the development of sustainable programming. Sustainability is, however, a critical factor to consider with regard to the overall impact of the Initiative. Programs that have continued beyond the term of the grant period are, of course, able to involve additional youth. They also have the potential to maintain and build upon the various youth, library, and community impacts described in this chapter. Sustainable programs additionally offer important lessons in that they illustrate a range of feasible youth programming

for public libraries, as well as the particular institutional contexts that make such programming possible.

Of the seven sites that used PLYD funding to develop new youth programs (as opposed to the expansion of existing programs), only King County and Tucson developed strong programs that have been sustained since the grant ended. (King County's Techo Teen program has been sustained in the form of the Library Page Fellowship program. Although all three of Tucson's PLYD-funded programs have continued, the Computer Aide Program has been the most important and successful.) These programs are defined as "strong" because they were well supported by top-level administrators and front-line staff; included youth and/or staff training components; and were credited with leveraging a variety of important secondary effects, such as improving staff attitudes toward teens and attracting more youth to the library. Despite being relatively expensive programs that involved paid youth positions, both were absorbed into their respective library budgets.

Both Baltimore and Fort Bend developed sustainable programs that were more modest in terms of their scope and impact. (Baltimore continued its Community Youth Corps, and Fort Bend continued its Youth Advisory Council and instituted a Teen Reading Club.) These programs were less strongly and/or uniformly supported by top-level administrators and front-line staff, sustained no training components after the PLYD grant ended, and leveraged fewer secondary effects. Both have been relatively inexpensive, relying on youth volunteers rather than paid positions. As of 2003, fundraising supported Baltimore's program, and a Friends of the Library group financed Fort Bend's. Both libraries, however, have developed an important level of institutional support for youth programs in the form of a new full- or part-time youth service staff position. Overall, the Baltimore and Fort Bend programs, although more modest than others involved in the PLYD Initiative, represent important steps forward in terms of youth programming for the libraries involved.

Brooklyn, Charlotte, and Washoe County terminated the new youth programs that they had developed as part of the PLYD Initiative at the conclusion of the implementation period. In Charlotte, however, the experience of the PLYD grant is credited with having sparked the creation of two new youth initiatives, as well as two new youth service coordinator positions. (One of these positions has been incorporated into the library budget, and one relies on grant-generated funds.) In addition, the PLYD grant is believed to have improved staff attitudes toward teens and brought new youth into the library. Consequently, it is fair to say that the PLYD grant has had a lasting impact in Charlotte, even though the specific programs that it funded were not sustained.

In Washoe County, the primary impact of the PLYD grant was reported to be the positive change in staff attitudes toward teens and youth programs. The grant also produced a lasting institutional resource in the form of "Spanish Dial-A-Story," which was developed by teens paid through the PLYD grant, working under the direction of a paid consultant. In its current form, Spanish Dial-A-Story includes fifty-two stories that are rotated on a weekly basis. In 2003, the library received an average of 700 calls a month from children who wanted to listen to a story in Spanish. In addition, many of the teens that participated in the PLYD-funded programs have elected to stay on at the library as volunteers.

The experiences of Philadelphia and Oakland, which received funding to expand homework help programs with paid teen assistants that predated the PLPYD grant, were quite varied. Philadelphia succeeded in using the grant to enhance its existing LEAP program and was able to maintain these enhancements after the grant ended. This site was exceptional in that it entered into the PLPYD grant with a high level of institutional capacity for youth programming and a degree of administrative expertise that allowed the PLPYD funds to be used in a particularly productive way. Overall, LEAP stands out as a model for successful youth programming that deserves to be disseminated throughout the library field. (It should not be expected that such a model can be widely replicated, however, as many libraries will not have the capacity to do it.)

Oakland had a much more difficult, although equally instructive, experience. This site also entered the PLPYD grant with an established homework help program that employed paid youth assistants. In what seemed to be a logical next step, the library planned to use their PLPYD funding to significantly expand the PASS! program, adding several new components, four additional community sites, and moving from a 9-month to a full-year program. In practice, however, these plans proved to be premature. In part, this was due to the fact that the library as a whole was in the middle of a difficult period when the grant was awarded, because it lacked a permanent executive director, as well as strong top-level leadership for youth services more generally. Even more importantly, however, the PASS! program was itself in serious need of structural reform.

Attempting to expand this program without first identifying and addressing basic issues that were causing widespread dissatisfaction with it was a mistake. Happily, the library system was able to recognize this and make mid-course corrections during the grant period. Although a strong new executive director with a commitment to youth services facilitated this change, it also reflected the ability of involved staff to engage in constructive criticism and cooperate to make needed reforms. These included closing non-library homework help sites, bringing the training and selection of employed youth in-house, and exploring ways to better integrate the program into the library. The support for PASS! provided by the PLPYD grant seems to have facilitated these changes, in that it underscored the intrinsic value of the program and of youth programming more broadly.

Factors Influencing Sustainability

Several factors best explain why the majority of the PLPYD sites were unable to build and sustain strong new youth programs or successfully expand existing ones despite the support of the PLPYD grant. These include the problems of (1) failing to integrate programs sufficiently into the structure and culture of the library, (2) implementing programs that placed excessive demands on existing library capacities, (3) pouring money into programs that were financially unsustainable, (4) failing to develop support among top-level administrators for continued program funding, and (5) failing to build an institutional infrastructure capable of supporting youth programs on a long-term basis. Of the nine PLPYD sites, only three (King County, Philadelphia, and Tucson) did not experience any of these problems. The remaining sites each grappled with between two and four of them throughout the course of the grant.

Insufficient integration into the library system. Although the problem of integration into the library system manifested itself in a variety of forms, it was the most common, affecting six of the nine PLPYD sites. As we discussed in Chapter 4, it is difficult to achieve commitment if staff feel a youth program is disconnected from the basic purposes and operations of the library. Generally, it is challenging to involve library staff in new or expanded youth programs because it demands more time out of their already overloaded work schedules. If this is not done, however, staff have little incentive or opportunity to develop a sense of loyalty to the program, and to learn from and contribute to it. Consequently, it is important to find ways to connect staff to programs. In order for these connections to be productive, however, programs must be structured in a way that allows them to become sources of enjoyment and support, rather than simply additional work for library staff.

At the same time, it is important that both top-level administrators and front-line staff share an understanding of why youth programs represent important components of the larger library mission. In several of the PLPYD sites, a sufficiently strong connection between the goals of newly established youth programs and the mission of the larger institution was never forged. In some cases, this was because the purported connection was not compelling to many staff, who believed that the new program was a poor fit with the library. One assistant director, for example, remained skeptical of her library's PLPYD Initiative, stating that: "We are not a social service agency. What the library does should focus in on the library. I haven't seen the tie-in yet." In other cases, the problem was more a matter of logistics, as in the case of programs that were not structured to keep staff reasonably informed and involved.

Excessive demands on existing capacity. Several of the PLPYD sites committed themselves to new or expanded programs that placed excessive demands on existing library capacities. As a result, it was clear well before the grant ended that these initiatives would not be sustained. One PLPYD project director, for example, stated in the last year of the grant: "The truth is, we don't have the capacity to keep going with it on this level. I'm not even sure we would want to, because it was an ambitious plan that has drained us."

At another site, a top-level administrator explained: "Truthfully, the PLPYD grant, wonderful as it was, put us over the edge." When the library obtained the grant, there was a rush to expand the library's flagship youth program without adequately considering its underlying stability and strength. As the program "mushroomed," some branch staff (who were not so enthusiastic about it to begin with) came to feel that they "couldn't handle it." "We were over optimistic about what we could provide and how many people we could hire and supervise, and what our facilities could support," explained the same administrator in an interview conducted during the second year of the grant. She said: "When you get more money, you want to expand, but once you expand you realize that you need more support."

Investing in financially unsustainable programs. Several sites invested heavily in youth programs or program components that were financially unsustainable. Of course, any type of program—even basic library services—may be vulnerable to budget cuts and/or the unpredictability of grant monies. In these cases, however, any rationale for continued funding appeared to be weak to nonexistent. One site, for example, spent a larger part of its grant money

on a youth-run business that was supposed to become self-sustaining (or, at least, very close to it) by the end of the grant period. By the second year of the grant, however, it was estimated that although it would take approximately \$6,000 to \$7,000 in monthly revenues to achieve this goal, the business was in fact only generating \$500 to \$1,500 monthly and was unlikely to become more profitable in the near future.

At another site, teens participating in a computer assistance employment program were provided with almost a year's worth of paid trainings (occurring an average of once a week) before assuming their positions at the library. Once the youth were trained and placed into their new positions, there was not enough work to keep them busy. Further, they did not have an opportunity to employ the many computer skills that they had learned. At another site that also implemented a computer assistance program, because of local government restrictions teens could only be paid a maximum of \$500 a year to work 50 hours (which, in the first year, included a week-long computer training) for the library. After earning \$500, youth could not work for pay again in the program until the following fiscal year.

Failing to develop support for continued investment. In several cases, sustainability was hampered by the fact that influential library staff, community leaders, and/or local funders were never convinced that the new PLPYD-funded programs merited the continuation of a comparably high level of investment. One assistant director, for example, was concerned because the local city government was focused on “output measures”:

You have to prove your worth. With several hundred thousand dollars from the PLPYD Foundation . . . we've reached 20 youth last year, 20 this year, and 20 next year. . . . This is not a model that is sustainable.

Similarly, one of the project partners at another site explained that the issue of devoting a lot of resources to a small group of teens dominated discussions of the impact of the PLPYD Initiative. Although community leaders who knew of the program liked it, they were concerned that “only a limited group of kids can participate.” One PLPYD project coordinator at that site stated that she responded to such concerns by explaining that “we're not talking about output, we're talking about outcomes and how the program affects the lives of the teens that we're paying.” She acknowledged, however, that it was “really hard to defend” that position, because “even our county is saying that cost per client is important.” Similarly, the development director explained that the library had “gotten some resistance” from funders who are dedicated to serving a broad base of youth. Although youth in the PLPYD program might be reaping great individual benefits, “their guidelines don't call for a deep impact on a few people.”

Failing to build program infrastructure. A majority of the PLPYD sites did not devote sufficient attention to building a solid infrastructure capable of supporting enhanced youth programming after the PLPYD grant ended. This failure to systematically build institutional capacity to support youth programs and services represents a major missed opportunity of the PLPYD grant. As the executive director at one of the PLPYD Library Foundations remarked: “program-oriented grants are doomed to failure eventually unless they push for the infrastructure to maintain it.” Infrastructure capable of supporting quality youth programming includes such components as dedicated program staff, high-level youth service coordinators, regular staff and youth trainings, regular staff and youth meetings, dedicated teen space, young adult collections

development, dedicated fundraising capacity, and partnerships with local schools, businesses, and youth-serving organizations.

Although some components of such an infrastructure were established at most of the participating libraries as a result of the grant, only a few used it to systematically build their existing capacity. In part, this problem seems to have stemmed from the fact that little attention was paid during the planning stage of the Initiative to assessing the existing capacity of the nine library systems. Although the libraries were given the opportunity to design a youth initiative that fit their particular needs, there seems to have been a widespread assumption that all of the sites were equally capable of developing a highly ambitious level of youth programming. In fact, however, the nine sites entered into the grant in very different stages of institutional development in terms of their capacity to build and sustain strong youth programs. In retrospect, more attention should have been paid to assessing existing capacity and planning how to build upon it in a systematic and realistic way.

Notably, staff at one of the most successful PLPYD sites repeatedly emphasized the importance of building infrastructure in their interviews. “I truly believe that infrastructure is what makes or breaks anything,” stated one senior administrator with years of experience building child and youth programs. In the view of her and her colleagues, opportunities such as the PLPYD grant should be used to “try out new things and find out what works . . . but not to go so far ahead of where the institution is at that you’re out on a limb with no support.” Program staff and top-level administrators should have a vision of how they want youth programming to develop and take steps to pursue that goal. At the same time, however, they must make sure that any new initiatives stay connected to what is already in place, building upon it in a way that is useful and sustainable.

“I truly believe that infrastructure is what makes or breaks anything.”
~Senior Administrator

Of course, not every component of each new program can or should be sustainable, no matter how carefully planned. These experienced administrators believe that new initiatives such as those funded by the PLPYD grant should aim to follow what they term the “one-third rule”: “One-third of what you do you realize was a useful learning experience; one-third is good, it’s solid, it’s built up something; and one-third you could not live without once you’ve started.” Although every new initiative will inevitably have some unworkable pieces, in other words, it should also contain practical elements that are almost certain to work, as well as bolder experiments that succeed in taking the institution to the next level.

Impact on Library Staff

Three sets of issues were particularly notable in terms of positive impacts on library staff leveraged by the PLPYD grant. These included (1) improved staff attitudes toward teens, (2) new conceptions of teens’ capability to engage in productive work in the library, and (3) a new appreciation of the value of dedicated “teen space” on the part of senior administrators.

Staff Attitudes Toward Teens

At seven of the nine PLPYD sites, a majority of staff were confident that the PLPYD grant had helped to improve staff attitudes toward teens. (At the remaining two sites, staff were more divided, or believed that this was probably, but not definitely, the case.) At one site, for example, the two PLPYD project directors agreed that staff had come “leaps and bounds” in their ability to work with youth. In particular, they had become more knowledgeable about adolescent development, gotten to know teens better as individuals, and learned to be much clearer in communicating their expectations. This finding was consistent with reports from youth, who noted that although library staff were often unfriendly when they initially became involved at the library, they became more friendly as time passed. Youth also perceived that library staff listened to their ideas more in the second year of the program than in the first.

“Adults no longer anticipate trouble when teens come in.”
~Project Coordinator

This positive change in staff attitudes toward teens represented the most consistently positive impact of the PLPYD grant across the nine sites. This finding is important in that it demonstrates that staff attitudes toward teens can be improved through such means as new or expanded youth programming, greater opportunities to develop personal relationships with teens, and staff training in youth development principles. Because more positive staff attitudes toward teens generally have a positive impact on a library’s ability to attract youth patrons and interact with them in developmentally positive ways, this change represents an important step forward for the libraries involved.

There is, however, reason to be concerned that such positive changes in staff attitudes toward teens will not last unless they are reinforced with the sort of youth service infrastructure discussed above. Given the high rates of staff turnover experienced by many of the PLPYD libraries, it cannot be assumed that a critical mass of staff who experienced such attitudinal shifts will necessarily be on board several years from now. Further, the fact that many staff felt that the most effective means of developing positive attitudes toward youth was by providing staff with structured opportunities to develop personal relationships with individual teens, it is probable that orientations will change if the programs that enabled such relationships are discontinued. Finally, as one senior administrator in Philadelphia explained, ongoing staff training represents an “absolutely essential” component of quality youth programming. If the regular staff trainings funded by the PLPYD grant are discontinued, the positive changes in staff attitudes toward teens leveraged by it are likely to be eroded over time.

“You look at kids differently after you’ve worked with them and get to know them. Sometimes what they look like is not who they are. You see a great big kid with his pants falling down, and slouching, and you may think certain things about him. But once he’s worked in the library for a day or two, and you see him, you think, ‘This is such a good kid!’
~ Branch Manager

New Conception of Teen Capabilities

A majority of the PLPYD sites reported that the Initiative had caused them to develop a different, and much more expansive conception of the type of work that teens are capable of performing in libraries. This shift was particularly pronounced in two of the

“The library staff have gained greater understanding and respect for what young people can contribute to an organization Over the last two years, they have realized that youth are a viable work force for them, that they can be very responsible, that a lot of the youth are better workers than some of the adults, and that they are really open and want this opportunity.”
~Program Consultant

sites where teens were paid to perform a combination of computer assistance and general library work. As one executive director explained:

We've learned to value the contributions that teens can make in running a library. We've come to trust them with tasks and job responsibilities that are far beyond what we had traditionally allowed them to perform. And I think staff are learning that youth can accept those roles, perform them very well, and can be real contributors.

Another executive director, when asked to identify the most important lessons learned by the library from the PLPYD grant, responded that the "focus on high school kids as employees who do things other than shelving books . . . has been sort of a breakthrough concept." Before the PLPYD grant, youth "were hired to basically put books on the shelf." The PLPYD Initiative proved that they could be entrusted with a much wider variety of tasks, and be genuinely helpful to library staff. At the same time, as discussed previously, youth themselves enjoyed performing a wider range of work. (Shelving books, in fact, was their least favorite task.) And, when well structured and well supervised, these expanded work roles for teens provided them with a much broader range of developmentally positive experiences.

Value of Teen Space

Although Tucson was the only PLPYD site to establish "teen space" with the help of the PLPYD grant, four additional sites developed or strengthened a commitment to creating such areas through the course of the Initiative. Specifically, Charlotte is incorporating a teen area in a large new Children's Learning Center that is currently under construction, and the library plans to include teen areas in any new branches that are built. (The existing branches are considered too small to include such dedicated youth spaces.) Baltimore is planning to include teen space in a new regional library that is slated to begin construction in the near future. Oakland is currently planning and raising money for a new teen area to be established in the Main Library. And Washoe County has solicited youth input regarding the design of teen space that will be incorporated into two new libraries that are being built. In all four cases, senior administrators reported that the experience of the PLPYD Initiative gave them a new appreciation of the value of dedicated teen space as an important component of library youth services. This view was similarly emphasized by youth in many of the PLPYD sites, who said that they would like the library to create a comfortable area where they can talk, read, watch movies, use computers, and listen to music.

Tucson's "Teen Center" was begun with a state LSTA grant and was completed with the help of the PLPYD Fund. It consists of a separate, glassed-off section on the second floor of the Main Library that contains computers and a comfortable study and lounge area. Homework help is offered on Monday and Saturday evenings. (Although there is a need for more homework help hours, the library does not have enough staff to provide them.) One Chapin Hall researcher who visited the Teen Center in 2002 wrote the following:

I am struck by the high quality of the materials in the room. For example, the chairs at the computers have an ergonomic design. Also, the room has a mixture of professional-quality and teen signs/artwork and resources The mixture of computers, print resources, comfortable

chairs, teen-focused art and books seems to create a warm atmosphere . . . Youth are respectful of each other and the noise level is low.

The Teen Center is busiest on afternoons and weekends, although school groups frequently come through in the mornings. According to one young adult librarian, it attracts a wide mix of youth. Another staff member who works regularly with outside partners believes that it has helped to raise the profile of the library as a good place for teens in the community. And, although youth in the Tucson programs were somewhat critical of the location and the amount of space dedicated to the teen room as compared with the children's area, they believed that it did make the library a more attractive place for teens.

Institutional Impact of Youth Development Principles

The PLPYD Initiative was heavily informed by the “positive youth development” principles popularized by the youth development movement discussed in Chapter 1. Staff interviews conducted at the PLPYD libraries revealed that the exposure to these principles provided by the PLPYD grant had a significant positive impact in at least six of the nine sites. In particular, youth development principles were credited with changing the general culture of the library, providing an important “new language” for library administrators to work with, and helping the library establish a new leadership role for itself in the community.

“Knowing about the developmental assets and putting our library programming into that framework has really lifted our position to another level with funders and our community. It's lifted our profession to another level.”
~ Program Coordinator

At one site, the executive director reported that the youth development approach had brought more empowerment to the library “as a whole.” Principles such as “doing with, rather than for” youth and asking them for their ideas regarding relevant library operations became recognized as valuable approaches that could be applied to many different patron groups, as well as to the internal workings of the institution itself. The executive director, for example, started an online newsletter to inform staff of “what's happening in the library” and encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings.

In two of the sites, senior administrators emphasized that one of the primary benefits of the PLPYD Initiative was that it provided the library with a “new language” for talking about their work with youth that connected to a broader public discussion and policy discourse. One of the PLPYD coordinators explained:

It gave us words to articulate the things that we were already doing, which obviously standardizes things across the board It gave us hope, because when you see other people doing similar things, whether it's working or not, you're still facing similar issues and have somebody to talk to. So that's definitely valuable. I've seen a transformation in the perspective in this institution based on this work.

“The phrase, ‘positive youth development,’ is a great handle to put on what we all are trying to do,” explained an executive director at another site. “It is not really new, but the focus has allowed us to do what we have been set up to do all along.” Another senior administrator emphasized the political benefits of being able to speak the language of positive youth development:

It gives me confidence that I can talk about this in a way that's credible to politicians. I can speak to the fact that this is a national effort in libraries and other institutions. It's being studied. It's documented and researched that this is an important and worthwhile thing to do.

In Fort Bend, the library's promotion of youth development principles was credited with vaulting it into a new leadership position in the community. In 2000, the library worked with the local Chamber of Commerce to sponsor a luncheon for 1,000 people that featured a speaker from the Search Institute. Initially, the head of the Chamber questioned why the library was involved in youth development and whether convening the community on behalf of local youth really constituted a part of its mission. After learning more about the project, however, his view changed. According to one senior staff member:

At the end of our meeting and negotiations he was 100% for it and understood our role because we were at the table . . . this was something beyond my ambition. I really didn't think that we could take a community that was as uninformed and unprepared for the [youth development] message as they seemed to be and move them this far in three years . . . so we are just flaunting our knowledge [about youth development] and it is really putting us at the top . . . really letting us take that leadership role.

Notably, this new leadership role is not without its difficulties. According to one senior administrator, the library continues to "walk a thin line" when arguing for broader youth services at the library, because she is wary of commission members and other citizens who have a very traditional view of what constitutes a legitimate library expense.

Impact on Community

Increased Use of Library

Of the seven PLPYD sites that started new youth programs as a result of the PLPYD grant, four believed that the Initiative had helped to increase teen patronage of the library in their community. Of these, three believed that the Initiative had caused an increase in adult patronage as well. Notably, each of these three sites employed teens to provide computer assistance and other help to library patrons. These libraries believed that their teen employees increased adult patronage because many adults liked the help that they were providing, as well as the general fact that local youth were working in the library.

"One of the big benefits of the PLPYD program has been the ambassadorship these teens have provided. We've established better relations with teen communities at large in areas that have Techno Teen workers. The library has been a discovery for them and they've talked about it with their peers."
~ Senior Library Administrator

One site that served a large immigrant population reported that teen employees were bringing their family members into the library as well. A Russian youth participant said his family uses the library more since he began working at the library. When his mother comes to the library, he helps her because she does not speak English very well. As a result of his job at the library, his sister knows she can put books "on hold" and asks him to locate and put books on hold for her.

"I think it's important for other teens to see teens working in the library. I think it's important for adults to see that and I think it's important for young children."
~ YA Librarian

In another site, the youth services coordinator said that the public in general and teens in particular would regularly ask for the teen assistant on duty and state that the library needed to have more teens. Similarly, a member of the PLPYD project staff reported that patrons had come to expect that teens would be on duty to assist them. At another site, a young adult librarian stated that their teen employment program has had a ripple effect because “it brings in all of their friends, their teachers, and their families.” Another stated that she thinks that the program is “good for the image of the library,” particularly with regard to teen patrons. In addition, adults frequently commented: “It’s really great that you have teens working here.”

Notably, at the site that believed that their new youth employment program was attracting more teens but not more adults, some staff were not pleased with this development. Complaints circulated that the program had caused the library to be “full of kids who don’t have enough to keep them busy,” and who were “hanging out” hoping to get “good-paying jobs like their friends.” Although staff dissatisfaction with the program was broader and not based simply on this issue, this experience does underscore that libraries need to plan for the fact that youth programs may attract more teens to the library, and that staff will need to have appropriate training and support in order to accommodate them without resentment.

Improving connections with diverse communities. At three sites, teen employees were also believed to have improved the library’s ability to serve diverse ethnic, racial, and/or national groups in the community. This factor was closely related to, yet distinct from, the larger issue of increasing teen and adult patronage of the library. As discussed in Chapter 1, the need to serve an increasingly diverse patron base represents one of the major challenges facing the contemporary public library. Consequently, the fact that these youth programs were regarded as particularly successful in this regard has important implications for the field as a whole.

“It really seems like one of the most worthwhile ways to approach the whole issue of diversity in our work force and that was the biggest surprise to me. I guess we should have figured that out, but we didn’t, and we woke up one day and said, ‘holy cow we’ve got a diversity program that is working!’”

~ Executive Director

Two of these three sites employed teens as computer and general library assistants. In both cases, senior administrators and front-line staff believed that these youth employees represented a particularly effective means of diversifying library staff. This staff diversification, in turn, was thought to be an important means of connecting the library with the diverse constituencies that it serves. At one site, for example, a branch manager reported that having bilingual computer aides was a huge asset for the library. At the same site, a young adult librarian stated that many patrons liked seeing an African American female working as a computer aide, as the library typically has few Black employees. In both sites, senior administrators hoped that employing youth of diverse backgrounds might be a good way to recruit minorities into the library field, as well as to establish advocates of public libraries in a wide range of communities.

In Washoe County, many staff were excited about the Spanish-Dial-A-Story program as a form of outreach to the Hispanic community. They believed that the Hispanic teens involved in the program served as effective “ambassadors” for the library in their community because they

“The project is changing the face of youth in our community. The public comes in and sees these helpful, knowledgeable teens, and that’s the opposite of what the media is presenting as the image of local teenagers.”

~PLPYD Project Director

had learned about the many resources that the library offered and communicated that knowledge to their families and neighbors. In addition, the Hispanic youth involved in the program were themselves enthusiastic about it because they felt that they were helping their community. As noted above, the Spanish-Dial-A-Story program attracted an average of 700 calls a month. This high call volume testifies to the popularity of this service in the Spanish-speaking community.

Community Leadership

Although all of the PLPYD libraries were highly regarded in their communities when they began the Initiative, three of the nine sites believed that it strengthened their leadership role, particularly with regard to youth issues. In Philadelphia, which was already regarded as a leader in terms of local youth issues when the PLPYD grant began, staff reported that the Youth Empowerment Summits that were organized as a result of it helped strengthen the library's connection with community organizations, schools, and businesses. In Fort Bend and Washoe counties, senior administrators and program staff believed that the library developed a new leadership role with regard to youth in the community as a result of their PLPYD-funded initiatives.

In Fort Bend, one senior administrator attributed this development to the fact that the library addressed an important community need by convening local youth-serving organizations:

Because of the grant, the library has become one of the facilitators in youth groups and youth-related organizations and coordinating programs. The library is taking the lead. So much is going on in the community, but the services are not coordinated or integrated. There is no one to pull them all together.

During the planning stage of the Initiative, this site had hired a consultant to research all of the youth-serving organizations in the community. This was important because such a knowledge base had never existed before. In addition, the library sponsored a half-day retreat that brought forty of these organizations together for the first time.

As we discussed previously, in Fort Bend County senior administrators believed that their work in educating the broader community about youth development principles had placed the library in a new leadership role. The influence of their work in this area is demonstrated by the fact that youth development principles (specifically, the forty developmental assets developed by the Search Institute) have been incorporated into a Youth in Philanthropy program that exists in all of the county high schools. The senior staff member remarked that library staff are pleased to see the broader impact that their work on youth issues has had. She said: "It is very rewarding to see youth development practices and philosophy applied communitywide less than five years since we first became aware of them."

Fort Bend continues to promote youth development in the community in several ways. The library received a grant to purchase the Search Institute's Asset Training kit for each library, and a senior administrator presents this training to interested community organizations. In addition, she continues to maintain active relationships with several of the community organizations that partnered with the library in its now-defunct PLPYD-funded program. Specifically, she has helped out with children's programs, taught children and youth how to use

the library online homework help service, and assisted with computer programming for seniors at these organizations.

Lessons and Implications

Examining the impact of the PLYD Initiative on participating libraries and the communities they serve offers important lessons to public libraries interested in developing or expanding youth programs. The nine PLYD libraries experienced significantly different degrees of success with regard to sustaining and/or building upon their PLYD-funded initiatives. In combination, the different factors that best explain these various outcomes suggest that public libraries need to think carefully about how to design youth programs that will build institutional capacity in a systematic and sustainable way. Youth programs have the potential to produce important benefits for public libraries, particularly in terms of strengthening their connection to the community that they serve and developing their leadership role within it. These positive impacts are unlikely to be sustained, however, unless libraries develop the infrastructure necessary to create and maintain quality youth programs and services.

Specific lessons learned include the following:

- ***Assess and build capacity.*** Before attempting to develop new youth programs or expand existing ones, libraries should think carefully about their current level of institutional capacity. At the same time, they need to consider where they would like to go in terms of youth programs and services, and what might constitute realistic next steps toward that goal. Youth programs should be designed to increase existing capacity for youth-related programs and services in a way that the library can sustain. Given the institutional variety of public libraries, what this entails will vary substantially from case to case.
- ***Invest in training and teen space.*** Although the most pressing capacity-building needs of different libraries will vary, the experience of the nine PLYD sites suggests that libraries should invest in providing regular staff training on youth-related issues, and in establishing teen space where it is feasible to do so. Training provides a critical means of educating staff about the nature of adolescent development, how libraries can work well with teens, and the purpose and value of youth programming. Training needs to be provided on a regular basis, however, in order to remain effective.

The development of teen space was not a strong focus of the PLYD Initiative. Many youth expressed interest in it across the nine sites, however. At the same time, many senior administrators developed a new appreciation of teen space as they focused more intensively on teen services through the course of the Initiative. Although not all library branches will be able to develop teen space, doing so where feasible appears to be a good means of building capacity for youth services.

- ***Learn the language of youth development.*** Particularly since the 1990s, the youth development movement has maintained an influential presence in the world of American youth programs and policies. Learning the language of youth development as developed by this movement not only offers important educational benefits to libraries but also

connects them to a larger network of organizations and policy discussions. In so doing, it enables libraries to communicate about their work with youth more effectively both inside and outside the institution.

- ***Connect youth programs to library mission.*** In order for a youth program to be successful on a long-term basis, it should have a clear connection to the larger mission of the library that is understood and accepted by both senior administrators and branch-level staff. This requires designing youth programs that have a compelling public purpose and effectively communicating that purpose to both sets of staff. If high-level administrators do not see the value of a particular program, it is unlikely to be sustained. At the same time, if branch staff do not feel invested, it is unlikely to run smoothly in the sites where it is implemented.
- ***Leverage the influence of small numbers.*** The PLPYD Initiative underscored the fact that public libraries can only work intensively with small numbers of youth at one time. Given their mandate to serve the general public, this raises questions regarding whether it is appropriate for public libraries to invest a significant amount of resources in a program that serves only a small number of youth. Particularly with more expensive programs, libraries need to be able to make a convincing case that they have important benefits that extend beyond the individual youth involved. This can be accomplished by designing programs that address important institutional and/or community needs, while also benefiting the youth that they work with. For example, a program that employs teens as homework help assistants may have a positive impact on both the youth involved, the children that they work with, the larger homework help program, the library's presence in the community, and the community's need for homework assistance and teen jobs.

SECTION IV. IMPLICATIONS

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

The PLPYD Initiative provided a valuable opportunity for public libraries to explore new means of enhancing youth programs and services. Although participating libraries were provided with broad guidelines for how the Wallace Foundation grant should be used, they also were given significant latitude to design programs and activities that fit their own particular context, interests, and needs. As a result, the Initiative produced a rich and diverse set of projects that offers important lessons regarding the opportunities and constraints for public libraries if they attempt to significantly expand their youth programs and services. Although they are most immediately applicable to public library professionals, these lessons should also be of interest to policy makers, funders, youth service professionals, and others concerned with issues of youth development and support, particularly in low-income communities.

To review, the PLPYD Initiative was designed to provide individual teens with developmentally enriching opportunities in public libraries, including part-time paid and volunteer positions; training to support educational, vocational, and personal development; caring relationships with supportive adults; and improved access to and knowledge of institutional resources. In the process, it was intended to improve the overall quality of youth services by developing or expanding youth programs, using youth development principles to inform staff practices and library operations, and creating new connections with schools and other community organizations. Although all of the libraries selected to participate in the Initiative serve heavily low-income constituencies, they include a wide variety of geographic locales and administrative structures. Participating libraries used the PLPYD funding to invest in a wide range of youth programs and services, including paid and volunteer positions for teens as homework, computer, and general library assistants; members of youth advisory councils; library advocate and outreach staff; and copy and design center employees. In addition, they developed or expanded a wide variety of youth and staff trainings, and community partnerships.

Considered as a whole, the PLPYD experience demonstrates that public libraries have the potential to design youth programs that provide developmentally enriching experiences to participating teens and have a positive impact on youth services and the library more broadly. Implementing and sustaining these projects, however, is complicated, time-consuming, and expensive. Moreover, the belief voiced by many library staff that their libraries are understaffed and underfinanced, and given that youth are only one of many constituencies they serve, raises questions of institutional capacity and mission. If more public libraries are to follow the path forged by the PLPYD Initiative, they first should carefully assess their capacity to develop youth programs, as well as their expectations regarding what such programs should accomplish, both for youth and the library. In the process, they need to identify how they might best take steps to build their capacity for youth programs and services in a way that is sustainable and in keeping with the larger mission of the institution.

In the remainder of this chapter, we expand on this conclusion by discussing specific findings and recommendations in the areas of institutional capacity, the staffing and support of youth programs, and youth engagement. Finally, we reflect on the role of the public library in supporting youth and on alternative strategies for enhancing library services for youth.

Institutional Capacity

- ***There are advantages to programs that engage youth intensively.*** Intensive programs are defined as those that involve regular youth participation over a substantial period of time (e.g., at least several hours a week for a year or more). In the PLPYD Initiative, examples of intensive programs included employing teens as part-time computer help, homework help, and general library assistants at several sites, as well as in Charlotte's copy and design center. Notably, all of the programs that produced intensive engagement involved paid teen positions. (When volunteer positions were used, the tenure of youth involvement decreased substantially.)

There are several advantages to intensive programs. First, because youth remain substantially involved over a longer period of time, they are more likely to reap the educational, vocational, and personal benefits found to be associated with library youth programs. Second, intensive programs allow library staff to get to know youth well on an individual basis, which many involved in the Initiative believed to be the most effective means of improving staff attitudes toward youth. Continuity in teen-staff relations also allows youth employment programs in particular to become an important support to library staff, because youth have the time to learn to do their jobs well with a minimum of adult supervision. At the same time, when teens are employed in positions that involve substantial interaction with library patrons, longer job tenure allows them to develop beneficial relationships with those that they serve. (Children, for example, may form valuable relationships with teen mentors in homework help programs.) Taken as a whole, these factors tend to have a positive impact on the entire library system, as youth become well integrated into the institution and, in most cases, part of its public persona.

- ***Intensive programs are, however, expensive and time-consuming to operate.*** In addition to the expense of youth salaries, high-quality programs need to have at least one part-time program coordinator, the support of a senior administrator and of librarians in branches where the program is operating, regular staff and youth trainings, and other forms of in-kind support. Covering such costs requires a substantial investment on the part of the library, including a relatively high level of dedicated funding. For many libraries, achieving this will require a budgetary commitment from local government and/or intensive fundraising efforts.
- ***Public libraries need to assess and build their capacity for youth programs and services in a systematic way.*** It is helpful to think of youth programs and services on a continuum that extends from establishing a good young adult collection to developing and sustaining intensive youth programs. Although the particular mix of programs and services that fit a given system will vary, all libraries must be careful to think about how to build their capacity in a systematic and sustainable way. One of the central problems with the

PLPYD Initiative was that a number of sites attempted to implement ambitious youth programs that they were not prepared to sustain once the Wallace grant ended. And, because insufficient attention was devoted to building a lasting infrastructure for youth services, several of these programs left a minimal institutional legacy once they were discontinued.

Most professionals would probably agree that all public libraries should strive to offer teens a high-quality young adult collection, computer access, good customer service, and a safe, welcoming, youth-friendly environment. Findings from the PLYD Initiative suggest that regular staff training in youth development and youth service is necessary to achieve these goals. In all of the nine sites, many librarians and senior administrators complained that few library schools provide training in public service and community outreach, let alone young adult services. This means that most professionals enter the field with little understanding of how best to serve teens as a distinct patron group. This is particularly problematic because teens and librarians have traditionally harbored negative stereotypes of one another, which creates barriers to overcome that do not exist in working with other patrons.

- ***Once public libraries have met their basic youth service goals, they should try to move to the next level of programs and services.*** Libraries at this stage might, for example, establish dedicated teen space, provide volunteer opportunities for teens, and/or hire a youth services coordinator to develop youth programs. Only public libraries that have built a solid infrastructure for youth programs and services should attempt to implement these types of intensive programs. And, in doing so, they should be careful to design programs that will build further capacity in a sustainable way.
- ***Youth programs work best when they are part of a strong sense of institutional mission.*** Public libraries are challenged to respond to a wide range of public needs, which include but extend far beyond those of youth. Findings from the PLYD Initiative indicate that institutions with a strong sense of mission are best equipped to meet these challenges and make the most out of new opportunities such as the Wallace grant. Having a sense of mission that permeates the institution—which typically requires a strong executive director—helps create harmonious relations among different levels of staff and boosts the energy and morale of employees throughout the system. This, in turn, supports the implementation of youth programs, which require the support of both senior administrators and librarians and demand a substantial investment of time and energy.

It is critical, however, that the connection between youth programs and services and the larger mission of the institution be understood and accepted by both senior administrators and library staff. This requires designing a program capable of being accepted on those terms and communicating about it effectively to employees throughout the system. Although all staff should be informed about youth programs, it is particularly important to have open channels of communication with staff in branches where youth programs will be operating. In general, staff that are impacted by youth programs need to feel they may pose questions (and, if need be, voice complaints) about them that will be responded to. Although this is important on the level of daily operations, it is most vital with regard

to the overall purpose of the program. If the general purpose of a youth program is understood and accepted as an important part of the overall mission of the library—and this mission has been previously internalized and embraced by library staff—then staff are much more likely to support the program regardless of daily mishaps and its inevitable ups and downs.

If the mission of the library is not commonly understood to include substantial investments in youth programs and services, this should be addressed before trying to make such investments. In some cases, the overall mission might need to be reformulated. In others, the importance of youth programs and services might need to be specified and communicated. If this is not done, it is unlikely that whatever programs and services are developed will be sustained.

- ***The more expensive a youth program is, the more it needs to have a positive impact that extends beyond those directly involved.*** Today, both public agencies and private funders routinely demand that institutions that receive funding to provide public or social services demonstrate that they are spending money in a cost-effective way. With regard to youth programs, this frequently involves requests to provide outcome measures or some equivalent documentation of program effectiveness. Although it is often difficult or impossible to provide hard data on youth outcomes due to the complexity and cost of the necessary research, it is important to have at least some clearly defined set of objectives that youth programs can be reasonably expected to accomplish.

As we discussed above, intensive programs are most likely to produce positive outcomes in terms of youth development, staff support, staff attitudes toward teens, and community perceptions of the library. However, they are correspondingly more expensive to operate. As the expense of a program mounts, library administrators are likely to be under increased pressure from both internal and external sources to justify its cost. This means that if libraries are to implement intensive youth programs, they must be careful to design them so that their benefits can be convincingly documented and communicated.

Some types of youth programs will be easier to do this with than will others. For example, employing teens as homework help assistants is relatively easy to justify, because some staff will be needed to assist children with homework in such programs in any event. Given a high-quality program, having teens perform this role can be reasonably expected to produce positive outcomes both for the youth involved, the children in the program, the other staff involved in it, and the community more broadly. In contrast, a major problem with Charlotte's copy and design center was that library staff, senior administrators, and external observers were generally skeptical that it benefited anybody other than the small group of teenagers involved. This proved to be a major reason that this program was not sustained once the PLPYD grant ended.

- ***Well-designed youth programs can help build library capacity.*** Although youth programs—and more intensive ones in particular—tend to be expensive, complicated, and time-consuming, they also have the potential to reap significant benefits for the

library. In particular, well-designed, high-quality youth programs can build institutional capacity in a variety of ways.

Staff training is an important component of any quality youth program. Learning how to conduct regular staff trainings represents an important capacity-building measure for the library, both with regard to youth services and more broadly. A number of the PLPYD libraries additionally found that educating library administrators and staff in the language of youth development produced important benefits. These included improving staff understanding of teens, creating a more interactive and inclusive institutional culture, communicating more effectively about library youth programs and services, and creating a new leadership role for the institution in the community.

Teen employment programs may also build capacity by providing staff with a source of flexible, multipurpose support. As several libraries that participated in the PLPYD Initiative found, simply realizing that teens could be productively engaged in a variety of tasks beyond shelving books represented an important breakthrough in terms of institutional operations. In cases where youth employees interacted with the general public, several PLPYD libraries found that they played a valuable role in terms of allowing the library to better serve diverse cultural and linguistic communities. At the same time, these programs are believed to hold promise in terms of meeting future recruitment needs, particularly with regard to diversity.

Staffing and Program Support

- ***Youth programs require multiple levels of support from library staff.*** Although the precise configuration of staffing needs will vary among programs, it is generally true that youth programs require the support of a dedicated program coordinator, a senior administrator, and librarians in the branches where they will be operating. Depending on the size and complexity of the program, the program coordinator may also need assistance with routine administrative tasks. At the same time, a variety of library departments, such as security, human resources, and development, may also need to provide assistance and support. If libraries are to handle multiple programs effectively, they also need the support of a high-level youth services coordinator.

Across the PLPYD sites, program staff, senior administrators, and librarians all agreed that youth programs required a dedicated program coordinator on at least a part-time basis. Typically, this person is needed to oversee the program on a day-to-day basis, communicate with senior administrators and branch staff, recruit youth, develop staff and youth trainings, and work with any program partners. Another consistent finding was that the program coordinator needed the active support of at least one senior administrator in order to do his or her job well. If this support was not provided, the coordinator was too isolated from the larger structure of the library, which had a negative effect on the overall program.

Youth programs also require the active support of library staff in branches where they are operating. These staff need to understand the basic purpose of the program and how it

forms a part of the larger mission of the library. They also need to have open channels of communication with the program director and trust that their views will be respected and considered. Despite the time that it requires, it is also important that at least some branch staff play an ongoing role in important aspects of program operations, such as hiring youth. If this does not occur, staff are likely to disengage from the program, depriving it of the support necessary to sustain it over the long term.

Other library staff that are not formally engaged in a youth program may also be important to it. For example, if security guards are unfriendly or hostile to youth, the library will not be able to develop a welcoming environment for youth regardless of particular programs. Alternatively, youth employment programs will probably require the help of human resource staff to review job descriptions, discuss union issues, manage payrolls, and so on. As a general rule, the larger and more intensive the program, the more it will require at least some involvement from a variety of departments throughout the library.

- ***Although non-library professionals can make an important contribution to youth programs, they require additional education and support.*** Given the shortage of young adult librarians nationwide, as well as the failure of library schools to provide training in either public or youth service, non-library professionals represent an important source of potential staffing for youth programs. However, they must have the time and support necessary to learn the library system.
- ***Ongoing staff training is an important part of successful youth programming.*** In order for training to work, however, it must be relevant to staff and respectful of other demands on their time. Emphasizing a youth development approach can be very helpful if it encourages staff to relate to teens in new ways and addresses their day-to-day concerns.
- ***Working with individuals and agencies in the community takes time and effort but, if selected carefully, they can strengthen library-based youth programs.*** Although PLPYD program staff at all of the sites connected with a wide variety of community organizations in implementing their programs, they only worked extensively with a small number of community organizations. The most productive relationships were ones formed with people and agencies that could extend the outreach, resources, and expertise of the library but that also understood the goals and needs of the library.

Engaging and Involving Youth

- ***Outreach to and fostering the participation of underserved youth is challenging for public libraries.*** Locating programs in libraries or community centers in low-income neighborhoods can be an effective way of targeting low-income teens. However, special efforts are needed to engage youth who do not usually come to the library. A related challenge lies in balancing the needs of some low-income youth with the capacity of library staff to work with them or, in other words, figuring out which youth can benefit most from participation in PLPYD activities.

- ***Community organizations that work with low-income youth can assist in recruiting youth, but they must have a clear understanding of program goals and expectations and the library context.*** In the implementation of the PLYD Initiative, there were advantages and disadvantages to using outside organizations to recruit youth for library jobs and programs. Schools, youth-serving organizations, youth employment programs and, occasionally, city or county juvenile justice departments brought in more “hard-to-reach” teens and teens who do not normally come to the library. However, the varied priorities and goals of outside organizations influenced which teens were identified for jobs, and they did not always fit well in the library environment. Thus, the success of referrals from outside organizations depended on clear communication between the library and the outside agency about the program expectations and the capacity of the library to work with more difficult teens. It also depended on the strength of the training and mentoring staff were able to give them.
- ***Both program factors and personal factors influence youth participation in library-based youth development programs.*** Youth were attracted by the service opportunities in the library programs, financial incentives, and the desire to use and develop computer skills. Their decision to participate was influenced, in part, by other responsibilities and after-school activities and family support. Although most of the PLYD youth were able to make arrangements to get to their jobs, transportation was clearly a significant obstacle for some, particularly those in rural areas. It was also one obstacle that program and library staff tried to help teens overcome, for example, by planning activities for times when teens could attend, scheduling them close to where teens lived, or providing bus tokens for use of public transportation.
- ***The relationship between teens and their supervisors or program leaders has a strong influence on their connection to their library job or activity.*** In interviews, teens often spoke about the positive effect of a relationship with a project coordinator or a library staff member. Clearly, the longer teens were involved in an activity or job, the greater opportunity there was for them to develop positive relationships with caring adults. These relationships appeared to be critical factors in sustaining participation.
- ***Youth participation requires both structure and flexibility on the part of adult leaders.*** Project and library staff across the nine sites worked to build relationships with, and hold on to, their youth participants. Youth, in turn, felt the PLYD project staff and librarians were fair in their expectations and willing to accommodate their schedules. Indeed, flexibility on the part of project and library staff emerged as an important factor in retaining youth in PLYD jobs and programs. However, this flexibility came at some cost to library staff. Libraries implementing homework help and computer assistance programs needed teens when the programs were busiest, that is, during the after-school and evening hours. Because of transportation difficulties and other activities, teens were not always available at the times they were most needed. On the other hand, less intensive programs such as youth advisory groups suffered from a lack of structure and engaging activities.

- ***Providing a range of positions for youth of different ages and abilities and engaging older youth as mentors to younger youth are promising strategies in youth programs.*** In the PLYD Initiative, a “scaffolding” or “apprenticeship” model that provides a “ladder” of youth positions whereby teens can potentially “move up” to more responsible, higher-level positions—and perhaps serve as mentors to younger and new program participants—was one way to maintain interest among youth. High school students also responded well to programs that used college students as program assistants or mentors. College students served as role models of youth who were involved in higher education and had career aspirations. In addition, teens enjoyed working with them and often saw them as having experiences that were directly relevant to their own.
- ***Library-based youth development and employment programs can provide a potentially wide range of benefits to teens in low-income communities.*** The benefits reported by youth involved in the PLYD Initiative encompassed personal and interpersonal behaviors and attitudes as well as specific job skills. At the same time, given the range of influences in the lives of youth, it will prove challenging to attribute particular outcomes directly to individual programs.
- ***Intensity of participation affected the benefits perceived by youth.*** Whereas many factors promote the attachment of youth to the library and foster their participation, the quality of the experiences and benefits reported by youth tended to be stronger for those who were engaged for longer periods of time. At the same time, intensity of experience might preclude some participants or be an initial hurdle for some youth to surmount in programs requiring more complex skills and training and/or time commitments.

The Role of the Library in Youth Development

Public libraries, because they are present in most communities, are a promising resource for youth in low-income communities that have fewer opportunities for developmentally enriching experiences. The implementation of the PLYD Initiative suggests that public libraries have the potential to provide an important developmental support to teens, especially those in low-income communities. Beyond providing quality collections, information, and professional guidance, libraries can also offer safe and welcoming places, adult relationships and role models, and meaningful activities.

What role public libraries *should* play, however, in meeting the developmental needs of youth—and which needs—depends largely on their capacity and resources as well as the strength of other community resources such as schools, parks, and other youth-serving organizations. The capacity of most public libraries is limited by chronic shortages of financial and human resources. There is a lack of library staff with knowledge of adolescent development and with training and experience in working with youth, and the current professional educational system does not provide an incentive to work with youth or improve services for them. Thus, one key recommendation for policy makers is to invest in public libraries that have some institutional capacity to expand services for youth and that serve low-income communities.

Library-based youth development and employment programs are effective ways of serving low-income youth. However, they require enormous effort on the part of staff and institutions. One weakness of the PLYD Initiative was its lack of emphasis on the institutional capacity of public libraries to serve youth. In the planning phase, libraries assessed the needs of their communities and particularly, the needs of low-income youth, but did not carefully assess—and hence, often overestimated—their capacity to work intensively with youth.

Given the increasing tasks facing youth in the 21st century and the complex skills they must develop to participate in future careers, all policy makers and institutions—not just public libraries—need to reexamine their roles in supporting youth. Public libraries should give more thought to how they can better work with and support schools and other youth-serving organizations in their communities. The challenges of working with school systems are well known, but many local branch libraries have discovered ways to connect on an individual staff level (which, of course, is even more challenging in low-income communities where teacher turnover is high).

Libraries should continue to strengthen their relationships with other community institutions and work with larger civic initiatives. In the PLYD Initiative, certain kinds of organizations made more sense for libraries to work with in efforts to support youth in low-income communities than did others. Schools remained challenging to communicate with but were considered important partners. Community arts organizations, youth media programs, and community health and counseling centers seemed to be promising new resources for libraries implementing new youth initiatives. Community development organizations and youth employment organizations were other natural partners for library teen employment programs, but successful collaborations depended on clear understandings of the needs and capacity of both the library and the community organization. As in all relationships, communication and establishing clear goals and responsibilities were critical to success.

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APPENDIX A

Overview of the PLPYD Initiative Sites

Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore, MD)

Program Activities

The project began at three branches and the Central Library, but expanded to other branches during the second and third years of the Initiative. Baltimore's core PLPYD program was the Community Youth Corps (CYC). CYC youth performed a variety of tasks, including computer assistance, homework help, storytelling, and planning after-school activities for younger children. Youth trainings frequently focused on computer skills, personal and social development, and leadership development. In addition to gaining skills, students received community service credits, a requirement for high school graduation. Youth also participated in a number of other activities, including writing articles for a newsletter, mural art, video production, and the teen summer reading program.

New opportunities were created for youth who completed the CYC program to continue in a leadership development group. Every six months, a new cohort of approximately 30 teens was hired. Youth in the leadership development program were paid a stipend of \$50. Students in the leadership group worked with adult leaders to plan, promote, and implement young adult cultural and educational events. Youth trainings frequently focused on computer skills, personal and social development, and leadership development.

Program Staff

The PLPYD Project Coordinator was a youth professional from outside the library who reported to the library's Director of School and Student Services. College work-study students as well as a branch manager or young adult librarian at each branch provided additional supervision to the youth.

Youth Participation

Seventy-three youth, about 51% male and 49% female, received training and were assigned to positions at the PLPYD library branches as CYC interns between April 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002. Approximately 60% of the youth were in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade, approximately 30% of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade, and approximately 10% of the youth were in eleventh or twelfth grade. Additional youth participated in other PLPYD-funded activities such as art projects, video production, and newsletter writing.

The primary criterion at the outset of the Initiative was for participants to be between 13 and 15 years old and to complete an application and an essay. In the second year, the age criteria was 13 to 18, because many older teens needed service-learning hours for graduation and lacked prior job experience. Baltimore's most successful strategies for recruiting youth were site visits to the Baltimore County public schools to explain the program to students, collect contact information, and network with school staff, and word of mouth by teens. Recruiting through the library's web site and sending mass faxes to schools and community organizations did not elicit interest in the program.

Community and Library Context

The Enoch Pratt Library is one of the poorest library systems implementing the PLPYD project. Most, if not all of its 26 branches are in low-income neighborhoods. The population of the central city—approximately 650,000 in 2000—has been declining and, as a result, the tax base has been eroded. A change in city government in 2000 shifted the focus of the local government on law and order, and school investment, which meant less funding for the library. Three branches were closed during the time of the Initiative.

Library and Community Statistics*

☐ Number of branches: 26	☐ Population under age 19: 94,545 (15%)
☐ Yearly budget: \$28,851,202	☐ Median household income: \$34,500
☐ Total annual circulation: 1,333,839	☐ Percent below poverty line: 23.7%
☐ Total FTE staff: 418.0	☐ Ethnicity: Black/African American: 64%; white: 32%; Hispanic: 2%; Asian: 2%; other: 1

*Sources: U.S. Census 1999-2000 and 2001 PLA Statistical Report

Brooklyn Public Library (Brooklyn, NY)

Program Activities

Located at five branches, Brooklyn's PLPYD Initiative consisted of several new youth initiatives, including the development of a Teen Advisory Group that was later suspended for lack of interest, a Technology Loft equipped with three-dozen computers, and two Video Documentary Projects. Youth in the two Video Documentary Projects used the computers at the Technology Loft to make videos about the lives of youth in Brooklyn and how the library fit into their lives. Brooklyn PLPYD teens also participated in the Teen Explorers program, a youth community-mapping program.

The PLPYD grant also helped to support the continuation of the Book Buddy Program and Teen Time. In the Book Buddy program, teens are trained to assist librarians and mentor children. The Teen Time program operates at different branches on different days of the week, providing time for youth to socialize with friends, play music, do homework, read magazines, and eat food in a section of the library. PLPYD youth also participated in other activities such as the Brooklyn Teen Events Newsletter (B*TEN), the Brooklyn Expedition Explainer Corps (an educational computer program for children), and InfoZone, BPL's web page for teens.

Youth in the Teen Advisory Group and the Book Buddy program were not paid for their work. Youth were paid hourly for their work in the Brooklyn Expedition Explainer Corps and in one of the video documentary projects. Youth who worked in the Brooklyn Teen Events Newsletter program and the Teen Explorers program received a one-time stipend of \$50 when they successfully completed their work. Youth trainings frequently focused on computer skills, how to provide homework help, video production skills, and future career development.

Program Staff

The PLPYD program was coordinated by a former young adult librarian and the Manager of Young Adult Services. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising the youth.

Youth Participation

Between April 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002, 88 youth, 35% male and 65% female were recorded as participants in PLPYD activities. They were given training experiences and/or assigned to volunteer positions and activities in several different areas. Approximately one-third of the youth were in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade, approximately one-third of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade, and approximately one-third of the youth were in eleventh or twelfth grade.

Brooklyn recruited primarily through printed flyers and applications and word of mouth by library staff and teens, although they found flyers were not very effective. The success of these recruitment efforts sometimes depended on the content of the activity, e.g., Brooklyn had problems recruiting for their teen advisory group. Overall, partner organizations occasionally were helpful in recruiting. For example, a teen poetry-writing program collaborated with a juvenile justice community-based intervention program to recruit youth.

Community and Library Context

With 59 branches and a Central Library, The Brooklyn Public Library is one of the largest urban library systems in the country. It is the fifth largest library system in the country, serving 2.5 million people. Brooklyn is a borough with a diverse population and a diverse set of communities. Each library branch is in a very different community. The library serves a sizable number of immigrant populations with major childcare needs—the issue of latch key children is an issue in many local branches, as are needs for assistance with literacy and English language instruction.

Library and Community Statistics*

- 📖 Number of branches: 59
- 📖 Yearly budget: \$78,811,203
- 📖 Total annual circulation: 10,916,696
- 📖 Total FTE staff: 1,043.0

- 📖 Population: 2,465,326
- 📖 Population under age 19: 360,147 (15%)
- 📖 Median household income: \$26,108
- 📖 Percent below poverty line: 26.5%
- 📖 Ethnicity: White: 41%; Black/African American: 36%; Hispanic: 20%; Asian: 8%; other: 11%

*Sources: U.S. Census 1999-2000 and 2001 PLA Statistical Report

Public Library of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC)

Program Activities

The PLPYD Initiative, known as Teens Succeed!, was implemented at two branches. The core activity of the program in the first year was a teen-run Copy and Design Center at the West Boulevard Branch Library. In the Copy and Design center, youth performed tasks for patrons such as making copies, faxing materials, and designing business cards, flyers, invitations, and letterheads. Many of the youth who worked in the Copy and Design center also worked in the library as “associates,” performing tasks such as tracing reports, sorting and shelving books, videos, and tapes, and cleaning the shelves and computer screens.

A second youth-coordinated program began at the Beatties Ford Road Branch Library in 2001. The Teens Succeed! youth created a newsletter about teen interests called “Teen Limits.” A teen club was also created in which youth discussed topics of their choice and books in a relaxed, recreational atmosphere. Youth planned and implemented a Poetry of Hip Hop program.

Youth received hourly wages for work at the West Boulevard site and stipends or other incentives at the Beatties Ford Road site. Youth trainings at both sites frequently focused on computer skills, the library and its resources, academic and literacy skills, future career development, and leadership development.

Program Staff

The two project coordinators were non-librarians with considerable experience working with teens in educational settings and youth programs. Other staff included the library’s Youth Services Director, and the managers of the two branches.

Youth Participation

Fifty-three youth, 58% male and 42% female, received training and/or were given positions in one of the two Teens Succeed! projects between April 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002. Approximately half of the youth were in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade and approximately half were in ninth or tenth grade. The initial criteria was that the teens had to be between the ages of 12-15, but criteria changed in that the age range became 13-16. Participants at both branches had to have a C average. Other criteria considered was behavior and leadership potential.

Charlotte used a variety of methods to recruit youth at the West Boulevard Branch, including referrals from a partner organization. Teens were also recruited via word of mouth, by seeing teens working in the program, and through an article in a local newspaper. The Beatties Ford Branch placed information and application forms at circulation desks in the library. The majority of teens who became participants saw these forms and filled them out on their own. Project staff tried to recruit teens who frequented the library, but few followed through on the application process.

Community and Library Context

Seventy-eight percent of the population of Mecklenburg County resides in Charlotte. Although one-third of Charlotte’s population is African-American, the two PLPYD sites are located in predominantly African-American communities (in “Westside” neighborhoods). Both the Hispanic and Asian, especially Vietnamese, populations are growing at rapid rates in Charlotte. The PLPYD Initiative coincided with increased attention to youth issues (school achievement, after-school activities, teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime) and efforts to improve the coordination of services. The library, which has at least a decade-old history of community outreach, is involved in these community initiatives. Unlike many other county libraries, it is an independent governmental unit.

Library and Community Statistics*

☞ Number of branches: 22	☞ Population: 695,454
☞ Yearly budget: \$23,760,512	☞ Population under age 19: 90,688 (13%)
☞ Total annual circulation: 6,305,590	☞ Median household income: \$45,350
☞ Total FTE staff: 447.0	☞ Percent below poverty line: 9.7%
	☞ Ethnicity: White: 64%; Black/African American: 28%; Hispanic: 7%; Asian: 3%; other: 3%

*Sources: U.S. Census 1999-2000 and 2001 PLA Statistical Report

Fort Bend County Library System (Richmond, TX)

Program Activities

The project was located at four library branches and seven partner sites, located in churches or community centers. Youth worked as Tech Teens, assisting younger children, their peers, and adults with computers. The Tech Teens were placed in one branch in year one of the grant and in the other three branches in year two of the grant. In the third year of the grant, Tech Teens who worked in the library branches also performed library duties such as shelving books. Tech Teens were paid a one-time stipend of \$500 for 50 hours of work. Tech Teens could not work more than 50 hours per year, but had the option to work more than one year. Youth trainings frequently focused on computer skills, personal and social development, future career development, and customer service.

Voluntary Youth Advisory Councils were implemented in the second year at the library and community centers where the program was located. The Young Adult Summer Reading program was held during the second and third years of the grant. Fort Bend youth also helped plan and implement two teen summits in the summers of 2000 and 2001.

Program Staff

The Coordinator of Youth Services served as the PLPYD Project Director. The PLPYD Project Coordinator, who was a library assistant in adult services before the grant, assisted the PLPYD Project Director. The managers at the partner sites and branch staff provided additional support in supervising the youth.

Youth Participation

Between April 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002, 60 youth, 42% male and 58% female, were trained and/or assigned to Tech Teen positions at library and community program sites. The majority of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade. Youth were required to be from low-income families or low-income communities. The partner sites recommended youth for the program, which worked well. After the first successful training of the Tech Teens, word of mouth was successful in bringing in more applicants. Teens who saw teens in the program working asked how they could become involved. Working with the local school districts had limited success.

Community and Library Context

With eight branches, The Fort Bend County Library System is the smallest of the PLPYD library systems but serves a broad geographic area. The county is economically and ethnically diverse and has experienced tremendous growth in recent years, but still has a number of pockets of poverty. Fort Bend's PLPYD Initiative served a largely rural low-income population.

Library and Community Statistics*

☞ Number of branches: 8	☞ Population: 354,452
☞ Yearly budget: \$7,353,503	☞ Population under age 19: 64,011 (18%)
☞ Total annual circulation: 1,659,665	☞ Median household income: \$55,164
☞ Total FTE staff: 138.0	☞ Percent below poverty line: 8.0%
	☞ Ethnicity: White: 57%; Hispanic: 21%; Black /African American: 20%; Asian: 11%; other: 9%

**Sources: U.S. Census 1999-2000 and 2001 PLA Statistical Report*

King County Library System (Issaquah, WA)

Program Activities

King County created the Techno Teens program, in which youth assisted patrons in the use of library resources, including computers and the Internet and locating/retrieving materials at sixteen project sites. They also learned typical library duties such as shelving books or other library materials, reading and organizing shelves, emptying the book drop, mending/binding of books, and maintaining the appearance of the library. They operated library office equipment that included photocopying, faxing, adding and/or changing supplies. Under supervision, teens also assisted with the promotion of library services, with display materials and bulletin boards, provided customer service to patrons and library staff, and helped library staff with special programs for various age groups that included reading aloud, homework help, leading games, program advertising, and recruiting and development for a youth discussion group. Techno Teens, who were paid hourly, worked an average of 10 hours per week during the school year and 15 hours during the summer.

Youth trainings frequently focused on computer skills and leadership development. Techno Teens also participated in other activities. For example, youth acted as ushers and helped performers and branch staff at the library's system-wide story fest, "Jump Stories of Horrors for Teens."

Program Staff

KCLS hired a professional in the field of youth employment and development to coordinate the PLPYD project. She reported to the PLPYD Project Director who was the library's Associate Director for Public Services. Branch staff provided additional support in selecting and supervising the youth.

Youth Participation

Fifty-five youth, 51% male and 49% female, were trained and hired in the Techno Teens program between April 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002. Approximately two-thirds of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade.

Selection criterion included: 1) enrolled and regularly attending a secondary school (GED and home school also apply); 2) lack of work experience/history; 3) household income; 4) commitment to goals and requirements of the program; 5) willingness to learn; 6) youth development needs; and 7) diversity (gender, ethnicity, disability, special needs, etc.)

Partnering with public schools and local social service agencies in targeted recruitment areas, involving library staff and branches in design and implementation of recruitment efforts, and advertising internally in the branch libraries were successful recruitment efforts. Project staff tried to identify low-income youth in areas that are primarily considered middle and/or upper class communities and to recruit from social service agencies that work with extremely at-risk youth, but these were less effective. Recruiting during the summer was also challenging because the library was competing with city/county summer youth programs that provide more short-term hours per week than the library provides.

Community and Library Context

King County Library System is a large, well-financed, and busy county library system with an exceptionally favorable financing structure and governance. During the 1990s, it doubled its square footage and staff, building 18 new libraries, bringing the total number to 41 branches and outlets. The library is an independent junior taxing district of its own. The library board is the only non-elected taxing authority in the state. Many different waves of immigrants have moved to the county in the past 10 years, including Hispanics, Vietnamese, Hmong, Cambodians, Russians, Eastern Europeans, Samoans, some Middle Easterners and Indians,

Library and Community Statistics*

☞ Number of branches: 41	☞ Population: 1,737,034
☞ Yearly budget: \$64,760,569	☞ Population under age 19: 218,253 (13%)
☞ Total annual circulation: 12,914,177	☞ Median household income: \$51,300
☞ Total FTE staff: 697.0	☞ Percent below poverty line: 8.0%
	☞ Ethnicity: White: 76%; Asian: 11%; Hispanic: 6%; Black/African American: 5%; other: 4%

*Sources: U.S. Census 1999-2000 and 2001 PLA Statistical Report

Oakland Public Library (Oakland, CA)

Program Activities

Ten library sites and four park district sites served as project sites for the Oakland PLYD Initiative. The cornerstone of the Initiative was the extension of the Partners for Achieving School Success (PASS!) program. This program hires teens to provide homework assistance, mentoring, and enrichment activities to 6 to 12 year old children. PASS! youth were paid hourly for their work. Youth worked 7 to 10 hours per week in the program.

A Youth Leadership Council was created during the grant. Youth in the Youth Leadership Council were not paid for their work, but received community service hours. The Teen Technology Docents program, which existed during the first two years of the grant, employed teens to provide computer assistance to patrons. In the second and third years of the grant, teen homework centers were created. Teen homework centers used college students and adult volunteers from the community to help teens with their homework.

Oakland youth also participated in other activities, such as a teen talent show and a conference, "Thinking in the Zone," where they evaluated and voted on architectural renderings for the new "Teen Zone" design at the main library. Youth trainings frequently focused on job policies and procedures, leadership development, personal and social development, how to provide homework help, and computers.

Program Staff

PASS! was staffed by a program coordinator and part-time site coordinators, who worked with teen mentors at each of the PASS! locations. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising the teens. For the first two years of the grant, the Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) was contracted to hire and train low-income youth for the PASS! program.

Youth Participation

One hundred eighty-four youth, 33% male and 67% female, were involved in PLYD activities between April 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002. Half of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade and approximately half of the youth were in eleventh or twelfth grade. Most of these youth were PASS! Mentors.

The basic criteria for the PASS! program included a "B" average, scoring well on T.A.B.E. standardized testing, a good sense of responsibility, and good communication skills. In order to become a member of the Youth Leadership Council, youth needed to be between the ages of 12-19 and attend a meeting. For the Teen Technology Docent program, youth needed to understand the program's commitment (120 hours of training and 120 hours of service), have parental permission, be between 14 and 18 years of age, and be attending high school.

The Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) recruited teens from public schools but also considered teens referred by branch librarians for the PASS! program. (At the conclusion of PLYD, the library decided to take control over recruitment and did not renew their arrangement with YEP.)

Community and Library Context

The Oakland Public Library is a mid-sized urban library system with 16 branches. Oakland faces many of the same problems afflicting other low-income cities: low quality schools, a high school drop out rate, low literacy, high crime, large numbers of single parent households, parents who are rarely home as they work several low paying jobs, substance abuse, a lack of affordable housing, and racial divisions. The city of Oakland is changing from a city that was essentially divided between Black and white to one that is multiethnic and international.

Library and Community Statistics*

- 📖 Number of branches: 16
- 📖 Yearly budget: \$14,735,587
- 📖 Total annual circulation: 1,803,577
- 📖 Total FTE staff: 230.2

- 📖 Population: 394,473
- 📖 Population under age 19: 51,166 (13%)
- 📖 Median household income: \$40,055
- 📖 Percent below poverty line: 19.4%
- 📖 Ethnicity: Black/African American: 36%; white: 31%; Hispanic: 22%; Asian: 16%; other: 12%

*Sources: U.S. Census 1999-2000 and 2000 PLA Statistical Report

Free Library of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA)

Program Activities

The PLPYD project in Philadelphia concentrated on expanding its branch-based LEAP after-school program from 3 days to 5 days a week. Four branches were designated as PLPYD branches for the purposes of the grant period, although services expanded to many library branches around the city. Thus, as many as 150 TLAs at 50 library branches participated in youth training funded by the PLPYD Initiative. The program was staffed by Teen Library Assistants (TLAs), a core group of youth who are paid to provide one-on-one homework, reading, and computer assistance to school age children. TLAs, who worked an average of 10 hours per week in the program, also do arts and crafts workshops for the children. A new opportunity was created for college-age youth who graduated from high school and were TLAs to become Associate Leaders (ALs). ALs created workshops, help TLAs with their workshops, and have a variety of other responsibilities. After-school Leaders (ASLs), in addition to the ALs, oversee the TLAs. Youth in the LEAP program were paid hourly for their work.

Youth trainings frequently focused on computer skills, personal and social development, how to provide homework help, future career development, and leadership development. Philadelphia youth also helped plan and carry out three teen summits during the course of the grant.

Program Staff

A PLPYD project manager with a background in education and technology was hired from outside of the library. Other administrative staff for the PLPYD Project included the Director of TOPPS, the Program Development Coordinator, and the library's After-School Program Manager. A distinct aspect of the Wallace branches was the branch team, consisting of the branch library staff, the branch-based After-School Leader, the LEAP teen employees, and volunteers if available.

Youth Participation

Thirty-three youth, 41% male and 59% female, were trained and/or assigned to positions as TLAs and ALs between April 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002 at the four designated PLPYD branches. Two-thirds of the youth were in high school, and one-third were college students.

Recruitment of TLAs usually occurred at the branch level. Branch staff selected teens for TLA positions from teen volunteers at the branches. Philadelphia also had success in using partners to recruit TLAs, such as Philadelphia's Promise Alliance for Youth, United Way, and the Philadelphia Youth Network. Asking teens to be TLAs who do not live close to the library was not successful, as teens prefer to hold after-school positions that are near to their homes. Many teens were also familiar with the TLA program through their peers or siblings, and contacted the library asking for employment.

Community and Library Context

The Free Library of Philadelphia is a very large urban library system. As a city agency, the library cannot raise money on its own; fundraising is the responsibility of the Library Foundation. When asked to describe Philadelphia and the needs of families, children, and youth, library staff largely talked about the poverty of the city, unemployment, youth violence, and the poor quality of public education

Library and Community Statistics*

- 📖 Number of branches: 53
- 📖 Yearly budget: \$46,501,775
- 📖 Total annual circulation: 6,341,612
- 📖 Total FTE staff: 944.0

- 📖 Population: 1,517,550
- 📖 Population under age 19: 223,427 (15%)
- 📖 Median household income: \$28,897
- 📖 Percent below poverty line: 21.7%
- 📖 Ethnicity: White: 45%; Black/African American: 43%; Hispanic: 9%; Asian: 5%; other: 5%

**Sources: U.S. Census 1999-2000 and 2001 PLA Statistical Report*

Tucson-Pima Public Library (Tucson, AZ)

Program Activities

The Tucson PLYD Initiative consisted of three primary youth programs and the creation of a separate teen area in the main library. Youth trainings frequently focused on computer skills, personal and social development, and customer service. One program was the Computer Aide program, which trained and hired teens to provide computer assistance to patrons in the main library and three branches. The computer aides performed a variety of tasks, ranging from signing up patrons for computers, trouble-shooting with patrons using the computers (MS Word, Internet, printing, and general computer maintenance). They also assisted librarians in removing non-circulating books from the shelves, shelving books, producing flyers, labels, and bibliographies, and assisting with children's programs. Computer aides were paid hourly for their work.

The second part of the Initiative was the Teen Advocate program. Teen Advocates were trained to give a series of public presentations to their peers on the various resources and services of the library. Teen Advocates were paid a one-time stipend of \$100 after they completed five presentations. The third program was a volunteer Library Subcommittee made up of youth members of the Metropolitan Education Commission's Youth Advisory Board/Tucson Teen Congress. Members of the Library Subcommittee helped to develop the teen center at the Main Library. Tucson youth also participated in other activities throughout the course of the grant. For example, youth helped plan and implement a "Murder Mystery and Library Lock-In."

Program Staff

A senior young adult librarian became the full-time PLYD Project Director. Another young adult librarian assisted her on a part-time basis. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising the youth.

Youth Participation

Eighty-two youth, 26% male and 74% female, took part in one of the three primary PLYD activities between April 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002. Approximately half of the youth were in eleventh or twelfth grade, 27% of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade, 14% of the youth were in sixth, seven, or eighth grade, and 13% of the youth were high school graduates or had earned their G.E.D. and/or were in college.

The main criterion for participation was that youth had to be living in low-income areas in Tucson neighborhoods. Most efforts to recruit youth were "personal contact" methods, such as having flyers and applications available during a teen celebration at the library, youth in the library subcommittee going to the Tucson Teen Congress meetings to talk about their experience in working at the library, branch librarians recommending teens they knew, and word of mouth. Partners, such as youth development and youth employment agencies, were also successful in recruiting teens. The least successful recruitment methods included non-personal approaches, such as posting flyers or posters.

Community and Library Context

In 2000, 90% of the population of Pima County lived in the city of Tucson. The county is very transient. This transience is due in part to the high number of recent Mexican immigrants, who regularly move on in search of better work or return to Mexico. Pima County has a large and growing youth population, which is expanding in conjunction with the number of single parents families living in poverty. Problems facing low-income youth in Pima County include low high-school graduation rates, high teen pregnancy rates, gangs, and racial and ethnic divides. The Tucson-Pima Library System is a large city-county library system. It is one of two public agencies jointly governed and funded by the city of Tucson and Pima County.

Library and Community Statistics*

☞ Number of branches: 18	☞ Population: 843,746
☞ Yearly budget: \$17,193,830	☞ Population under age 19: 121,132 (14%)
☞ Total annual circulation: 5,383,213	☞ Median household income: \$32,544
☞ Total FTE staff: 265.5	☞ Percent below poverty line: 16.2%
	☞ Ethnicity: White: 75%; Hispanic: 29%; Black /African American: 3%; Asian: 2%; other: 17

*Sources: U.S. Census 1999-2000 and 2001 PLA Statistical Report

Washoe County Library System (Reno, NV)

Program Activities

The PLPYD Initiative in Washoe County comprised of four primary programs, located at ten project sites, called Action Teams. Members of the Spanish Dial-A-Story Action Team selected, edited, translated, and recorded 54 stories in Spanish so that the Spanish-speaking community can call the library to hear a different recorded story each week of the year. Teens on the Wizards Action Team provided computer assistance to patrons at various library branches. The Wizards also performed other general library duties, such as shelving books. Members of the Storytelling-To-Go Action Team interpreted and performed stories at a variety of community events and at library branches. A Youth Advisory Council (YAC) was another Action Team created during the PLPYD Initiative. YAC eventually became Youth Adult Partnership (YAP). Some youth also took part in other activities, which included helping to create public service announcements for the library and giving input to interior designers and architects about teen space in the library.

The most frequent youth trainings were ones on computer skills and storytelling techniques to develop the Wizards and Storytelling-To-Go Action Teams, respectively. All of the Washoe County were paid hourly for their work and training, except for “volunteer” work they did in the library or community.

Program Staff

The PLPYD Project was managed first by a non-library professional with a business background, and later by a Young Adult Librarian. The library also hired several consultants from the community to manage the different actions teams, including a high school computer science teacher, a youth development professional, a professional storyteller, a director of a family support organization, and recording studio professionals. Branch staff provided additional support in supervising youth placed in their branches.

Youth Participation

One hundred and nine youth, 45% male and 55% female, were trained and/or participated in one of the Action Teams between April 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002. Approximately half of the youth were in sixth, seven, or eighth grade, 37% of the youth were in ninth or tenth grade, and 16% of the youth were in eleventh or twelfth grade.

Primary criteria for youth participants were a sense of responsibility, eagerness, flexibility, and a strong commitment to the program. At the beginning of the grant, youth had to submit an application and have an interview to be hired. Due to time constraints, this procedure was dropped in the second year of the grant. Word of mouth as well as recommendations from librarians were successful in recruiting youth. Recruiting at “community events” was not successful. YAC youth also interviewed potential YAC youth.

Community and Library Context

Washoe County has seen an enormous amount of growth over the past few decades, with the Hispanic community growing at a fast rate. In 2002, one of the biggest issues facing the library was the economic situation of Washoe County. As such, all of the county departments were instructed to cut their base budget for the next fiscal year by 5%. The most direct impact on the library has been the freezing of positions. The Washoe County Library System has both a Friends group and a Foundation.

Library and Community Statistics*

☞ Number of branches: 12	☞ Population: 339,486
☞ Yearly budget: \$10,846,104	☞ Population under age 19: 46,322 (14%)
☞ Total annual circulation: 1,618,587	☞ Median household income: \$42,070
☞ Total FTE staff: 141.2	☞ Percent below poverty line: 9.8%
	☞ Ethnicity: White: 80%; Hispanic: 17%; Asian: 5%; Black/African American: 2%; other: 2%

*Sources: 2000 U.S. Census and 2001 PLA Statistical Report

APPENDIX B

The PLPYD Evaluation Methodology

THE PLPYD EVALUATION

Chapin Hall's national evaluation of the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds' Public Libraries as Partners in Youth Development Initiative reflects Chapin Hall's primary supports research perspective. This perspective sees libraries as part of a sector of resources for youth and families, a sector that also includes schools, youth-serving organizations, religious organizations, and other community-based institutions. For more than a decade, Chapin Hall has explored how this sector of resources might serve youth better, as well as how it might be strengthened through deepening the infrastructure of organizations at the community level.

The PLPYD evaluation was comprised of four studies:

- **A policy mapping study**, conducted during 2000 and 2001, to explore the incentives and barriers to expanding the role of public libraries in promoting youth development and participating in community partnerships, and to suggest responses to key issues for policy and practice;
- **An implementation study**, which began in the winter of 2000 and concluded in the fall of 2002, to document the experiences of grantees and their partner organizations in developing new approaches to serving youth in public libraries, with a particular focus on strengthening youth access to educational and career preparation opportunities in low-income communities;
- **An intensive study of youth participation** at three sites, which began during the winter of 2001 and completed during the summer of 2002, to examine the relationship between program characteristics and patterns of youth involvement, and explore youth perceptions of the benefits of participation; and
- **A cost and financing study** to look at the costs of two particular approaches implemented by some of the PLPYD libraries: homework help and computer/library assistance programs.

A separate document on the policy map study was issued in the summer of 2002 (Whalen and Costello, 2002). Additional information about the other components of the evaluation appears below.

Implementation Study

Research questions for the PLPYD implementation study fell into several areas:

1. *Program approaches*: Did the libraries and their partners improve their ability to serve teens in their communities? How were existing services strengthened and what new services emerged? Were particular program types or implementation strategies more or less effective in accomplishing key goals? What were the implementation challenges?
2. *Youth recruitment and participation*: Were the libraries able to engage teens in low-income communities who previously were not regular library users? What challenges did libraries experience in targeting and recruiting "hard-to-reach" youth? What role did partners play in fostering participation?

3. *Developmental perspective*: To what extent did staff recognize the developmental needs and issues of adolescents and take them into consideration in their interactions with teens? What was the effect of the “positive youth development” approach used in staff training on staff attitudes and behaviors with teens?
4. *Partnerships*: What kinds of community partnerships made the most sense for public libraries? Did existing partnerships between libraries and community organizations change as a result of the PLPYD Initiative? What new partnerships emerged?
5. *Community role*: Did community awareness and perceptions of the library’s youth services improve over the three years of the PLPYD Initiative? Did interaction with partner organizations help to increase community awareness of library resources for teens?
6. *Sustainability*: How were new youth programs and services funded? Which components of the Initiative were sustained and why?

Information to answer these questions was gathered from a variety of sources—administrative data, in-person interviews, mail surveys, program observations, and reviews of documents. The primary research activities were the following:

□ ***Site visits.***

Annual visits to each of the nine libraries were made during the spring or early summer in 2000, 2001, and 2002. These site visits included the following research activities:

- Interviews with key library and partner participants in the Initiative, particularly project directors and coordinators, YA librarians, branch managers, executive directors, financial and development officers, and senior level staff from partner organizations. (Telephone interviews were conducted with key adult informants with whom we were unable to meet with during our site visits.)
- Interviews with selected community informants, including representatives of other youth-serving organizations.
- Observations of youth jobs and activities and follow-up interviews with program staff.
- Focus group interviews with youth involved in these jobs and activities.
- Collection and review of project documents and other written materials (community, library, and program information, local evaluations done by sites, recruitment flyers and application forms, web sites, site annual reports, ULC reports, etc.).
- Consultation with program staff regarding evaluation issues and concerns.

□ ***Quarterly data collection on PLPYD activities.***

Quarterly data collection began in April 2000, the middle of the first year of project implementation, and continued through June 2002, yielding approximately two years of descriptive data on project implementation. The nine sites reported quarterly on several categories of information, including youth recruitment strategies; types of youth training and activities (paid and volunteer); characteristics of youth participants; the frequency with which teens participated; participating community organizations; staff development activities; and cost and financing.

□ ***Surveys of adult and youth participants.***

- During the summers of 2000 and 2001, mail surveys were conducted with library staff, youth participants, partners, and community members about their perceptions of the PLPYD goals and activities, implementation challenges, youth recruitment and participation, and community partnerships.
- During the summer of 2002, a brief mail survey was administered to youth that had been involved in PLPYD activities since January 2001. The survey focused on what led teens to become involved in the PLPYD program, the extent of their involvement, the overall quality of their experiences and relationships, and how they felt they had benefited from their participation.

□ ***Review of other approaches to library youth services.***

We reviewed the literature on current issues affecting public libraries and other approaches to serving school-age children and teens in public libraries considered exemplary by professionals in the field. This review, along with a small number of interviews and observations at non-PLPYD library sites, enhanced our understanding of the factors and challenges that shape current goals and practices in library youth services and helped us to reflect further on the appropriate role and expectations of public libraries in relation to other developmental settings, given the range of adolescent support needs in low-income communities.

Study of Youth Participation in PLPYD

The national evaluation studied participation at two levels, the implementation study and an intensive study of youth participation. The intensive study began in 2001 at three primary sites—Philadelphia, Tucson-Pima County, and Washoe County. Individual interviews with 20 to 25 youth at each of these sites along with supplementary interviews at the remaining six sites resulted in the collection of a total of 105 interviews with a diverse range of youth participants. Research questions for the intensive study of youth participation were the following:

1. Who were the youth who participated in the PLPYD programs? Were they regular users of the library in the past? Were they involved in other extracurricular activities and, if so, which ones?
2. What kinds of library activities and programs encouraged teens in low-income or minority communities to participate? What aspects of programs or the library attracted them? What kept them involved?
3. What did *participation* mean in the PLPYD programs? How frequently did teens participate in different kinds of activities, how long did they stay involved, and how intensely were they engaged? Why did they choose to become involved in a PLPYD activity instead of another after-school activity or job?
4. What was the range of experiences associated with different kinds of PLPYD programs? What was the quality of teens' experiences and what benefits did teens report as a function of program type and level of involvement? Were there any negative aspects of their participation? Did participation in PLPYD change how teens use the library?

5. How did teens in low-income communities find out about the PLPYD programs? What circumstances or factors encouraged or made it possible for them to use the library or become involved in library programs? What obstacles did teens have to overcome or what supports did they need in order to participate?

These interviews yielded extensive information about the PLPYD youth, while also suggesting important features of quality programs and adult leadership that foster participation. In the final year of the PLPYD Initiative, we re-interviewed approximately two-thirds of the teen participants interviewed in 2001 at the three primary sites. These follow-up interviews gave us a longitudinal perspective on the role of their PLPYD experience in their lives and allowed us to follow up on specific issues that surfaced during the first interview. They included questions about teens' perspectives on their PLPYD activities one year later, benefits they gained from participation, changes in the nature of their involvement over time, and why they did or did not continue their participation. They also provided information on how these teens continued to use the library, the importance of their PLPYD experiences relative to other activities that engaged them when not in school, and the factors that influenced their participation and use of the library.

Study of Cost and Financing

A cost and financing study looked broadly at the costs of implementing two particular approaches, homework help and computer/library assistance programs, to serving children and youth. The goal of the cost and finance study was to understand the cost dimensions and fiscal requirements of these two program models. Research activities included the following:

- Interviews with key participants in cost and finance decisions at participating libraries.
- Collection of budget information and other financial records associated with management of the PLPYD programs since 1999, with an emphasis on clarifying resource requirements, including in-kind resources, necessary to sustain key program elements.
- Integration of administrative data pertaining to cost and finance.
- Literature review of library and nonprofit finance issues and financing opportunities.

In summary, there were three major sources of data that document the implementation of the PLPYD Initiative: 1) interviews conducted with library staff, youth participants, project partners, and community informants during 1999-2002; 2) surveys of each of these groups conducted during 2000, 2001, and, in the case of youth, 2002; and 3) quarterly administrative data collected from the library systems during 2000-2002. A variety of other data (e.g., program observations, focus group discussions, site documents, site grant proposals, site annual reports to the Fund, and reports by the ULC technical assistance provider) supplement this primary set.

- *Interviews* represent the most important and most comprehensive source of data about the Wallace Foundation initiative. As a general rule, interviews were semi-structured with standardized protocols for each major category of informant. With a few exceptions, they were tape-recorded and transcribed. All transcripts were coded and analyzed qualitatively. Over the three-year implementation period, nearly 400 interviews, or between 30 and 60 interviews per site, were conducted with library staff, partners, and community informants. A total of 142 interviews were conducted with youth during 2001 and 2002.

- *Surveys* containing both closed and open-ended questions were completed by library staff at various levels, representatives of partner organizations, and community informants identified by PLPYD project directors during 2000 and 2001. Youth participants completed surveys during all three years of the grant, 2000-2002. In all, a total of 187 library staff, 234 youth, and 118 community members participated in surveys across the nine sites. These data provide a useful complement to the interviews on particular topics. However, because not all sites had high response rates for all categories of respondents, the survey data are not necessarily representative of all participants in the Initiative.
- *Administrative data* were collected quarterly from each of the nine sites over a 2-year period (April 1, 2000-June 30, 2002). These data provided more complete listings of youth participants, project partners, youth and adult training experiences, and the content of programs and activities than could be gathered through other means. These data also provided basic information on youth recruitment strategies and criteria and program costs and financing.

Copies of interview, survey, and observation protocols are available from Chapin Hall upon request.

Table B.1 summarizes the research activities at each of the nine sites.

Table B.1. PLPYD Evaluation Activities by Library Site

Library Name (Location)	Annual Site Visits	Quarterly Administrative Data Collection	Annual Mail Surveys	Intensive Participation Study	Cost and Finance Study
Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore, MD)	▲	▲	▲		
Brooklyn Public Library (Brooklyn, NY)	▲	▲	▲		
Public Library of Charlotte/Mecklenburg County (Charlotte, NC)	▲	▲	▲		
Fort Bend County Library (Richmond, TX)	▲	▲	▲		
King County Library System (Issaquah, WA)	▲	▲	▲		▲
Oakland Public Library (Oakland, CA)	▲	▲	▲		▲
Free Library of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, PA)	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Tucson Pima Public Library (Tucson, AZ)	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Washoe County Library System (Reno, NV)	▲	▲	▲	▲	

APPENDIX C

The PLPYD Cost and Financing Study

Cost and Financing of Youth Employment Programs

The four tables in this appendix present detailed cost information for the LEAP program in Philadelphia, the PASS! program in Oakland, the Library Page Fellowship program in King County, and the Computer Aide Program in Tucson. These tables were developed by Chapin Hall based on interviews conducted with library staff at each site, cost information collected from each library during the course of the PLPYD Initiative, and program budgets and other documents provided by the sites. Although library staff have reviewed the information on these tables, they are not intended to represent official program budgets. Rather, as explained in Chapter IV, they provide a best estimate of total program costs as understood by involved staff at each site.

When reviewing these tables, please note that:

- All cost figures are based on 2003 dollars.
- Although individual salary levels were collected in order to figure program costs, these data are presented only as categorical totals.
- The cost categories listed in each table correspond to the “Comparative Distribution of Program Costs” bar chart included in Chapter IV.
- Whether cost data is broken down to represent in-kind support from the library or budgeted program costs depends on how library staff defined program costs, as well as the financing arrangements for each program. (For a detailed explanation of these differences, see Chapter IV.)

Philadelphia LEAP Cost Estimate (54 sites), 2003-04

	Base Cost	LEAP Time	Cost	% Total Cost
Teen Salaries				
Teen Library Assistants (3 @ 10 hrs/wk each, 48 wks/yr)	\$6.37/hr	1,440 hrs/yr	\$495,342	
<i>Fringe Benefits (12% total salaries)</i>			\$59,441	
Total Teen Salaries			\$554,783	20.5%
Program Staff				
Public sector relations (Children's Serv. Coord., TOPPS)	CONF*	50%	CONF	
Private sector relations (After School Program Mgr.)	CONF	30%	CONF	
Program Development Coordinator	CONF	20%	CONF	
<i>Fringe Benefits (20% total salaries)</i>				
After School Leaders (54 @ 16 hrs/wk, 48 wks/yr)	\$17/hr	768 hrs/yr	CONF	
Associate Leaders (6 @ 15 hrs/wk, 48 wks/yr)	\$10/hr	720 hrs/yr	CONF	
<i>Fringe Benefits (12% total salaries)</i>				
Total Program Staff			\$908,811	33.6%
Library Staff				
Project Director	CONF	5%	CONF	
Branch Staff: Library Manager	CONF	15%	CONF	
Branch Staff: Children's Librarian	CONF	15%	CONF	
Collection Development (includes several staff)	CONF	3%	CONF	
Clerical Support	CONF	10%	CONF	
<i>Fringe Benefits (20% total salaries)</i>				
Total Library Staff			\$942,168	34.9%
Trainings				
LEAP Trainers (includes several staff)	\$48,000	5%	\$2,400	
<i>Fringe Benefits (20% total salaries)</i>			\$480	
ASL orientation & training (trainer, materials, food)	\$100/site	annually	\$5,400	
Staff development (training, conferences, etc.)	\$12,000	annually	\$12,000	
Total Trainings			\$20,280	0.8%
Materials and Supplies				
Printing/Publications	\$100/site	annually	\$5,400	
Postage/Mailing	\$100/site	annually	\$5,400	
Telephone	\$100/site	annually	\$5,400	
Office Supplies	\$250/site	annually	\$13,500	
Other supplies (arts & crafts, etc.)	\$200/site	annually	\$10,800	
Total Materials and Supplies			\$40,500	1.5%
Overhead				
General overhead	\$3,000/site	annually	\$162,000	
Total Overhead			\$162,000	6.0%
Other				
Program Activities (special programs, etc.)	\$350/site	annually	\$18,900	
Laptop computer (software, maintenance, etc.)	\$1,000/site	annually	\$54,000	
Total Other			\$72,900	2.7%
TOTAL COST FOR LEAP			\$2,701,442	100.0%
TOTAL COST PER SITE			\$50,027	1.9%

*Confidential Information

Oakland PASS! Cost Estimate (8 sites), 2003-04

	In-Kind?	Base Cost	PASS! Time	Cost	% Total Cost
Teen Salaries					
	Y N				
Teen Mentors (33)	x	\$15,600	18%	\$92,664	
Total Teen Salaries				\$92,664	15.7%
Program Staff					
PASS! Coordinator	x	CONF	100%	CONF	
<i>Fringe Benefits (28.5% total salaries)</i>	x				
Outreach Coordinator		x CONF	48%	CONF	
Assistant Coordinator		x CONF	48%	CONF	
Library Assistants (8)		x CONF	38%	CONF	
Library Aides (8)	x	CONF	38%	CONF	
College Mentors (4)	x	CONF	13%	CONF	
Total Program Staff				\$355,312	60.3%
Library Staff					
Supervising Librarian for Children	x	CONF	10%	CONF	
Admin. Librarian for Program Mgmt.	x	CONF	10%	CONF	
Branch Librarians	x	CONF	10%	CONF	
<i>Fringe Benefits (28.5% total salaries)</i>	x				
Payroll mgmt. (PASS! staff)	x	CONF	n/a	CONF	
Total Library Staff				\$87,890	14.9%
Trainings					
Training Consultants		x \$4,265	n/a	\$4,265	
In-House Trainers (includes several staff)	x	\$20/hr	20 hr/yr	\$400	
Total Trainings				\$4,665	0.8%
Materials and Supplies					
Materials & Supplies		x \$7,000	n/a	\$7,000	
Total Materials and Supplies				\$7,000	1.2%
Overhead					
Overhead	x	\$40,000	n/a	\$40,000	
Total Overhead				\$40,000	6.8%
Other					
Food		x \$2,000	n/a	\$2,000	
Total Other				\$2,000	0.3%
TOTAL COST FOR PASS!				\$589,531	100.0%
TOTAL COST PER SITE				\$73,691	12.5%
Total In-Kind Support				\$414,531	70.3%
Total Budgeted Program Costs				\$175,000	29.7%
Total In-Kind Support Per Site				\$51,816	8.8%
Total Budgeted Program Costs Per Site				\$21,875	3.7%

King County Library Page Fellowship Program Cost Estimate (40 positions), 2003-04

	Base Cost	Time	Cost	% Total Cost
Teen Salaries				
External Page Fellows (25)	\$9.12/hr	15 hr/wk	\$175,949	
Internal Page Fellows (15)	\$9.75/hr	5 hr/wk	\$38,025	
Total Teen Salaries			\$213,974	57.4%
Program Staff				
Occupational Development Coordinator (FT)	CONF	45 hr/wk	CONF	
Occupational Development Assistant (PT)	CONF	20 hr/wk	CONF	
Total Program Staff			\$93,296	25.0%
Library Staff				
HR Team (includes 5 individual staff)	CONF	5%	CONF	
Total Library Staff			\$15,388	4.1%
Trainings				
Training		24-36 sessions/yr	\$10,000	
Total Trainings			\$10,000	2.7%
Overhead				
Overhead (est. @ 10% budgeted costs)		annually	\$36,626	
Total Overhead			\$36,626	9.8%
Other				
Local Travel		annually	\$3,600	
Total Other			\$3,600	1.0%
TOTAL COST FOR LPF PROGRAM			\$372,884	100.0%
ESTIMATED COST PER PAGE FELLOW POSITION			\$9,322	2.5%

Tucson Computer Aide Program Cost Estimate (6 sites), 2003-04

	In-Kind?		Base Cost	Time	Cost	% Total Cost
	Y	N				
Teen Salaries						
Computer Aides (2 per site @ 10 hrs/wk each, 48 wks/yr)	x		\$9.30/hr	960 hrs/yr	\$53,568	
<i>Fringe Benefits (10% total salaries)</i>		x			\$5,357	
Total Teen Salaries					\$58,925	25.0%
Program Staff						
Program Director (Senior Librarian)	x		CONF	50%	CONF	
<i>Fringe Benefits (28% total salaries)</i>						
Total Program Staff					\$41,267	17.5%
Library Staff						
Program Support (Senior Administrator)	x		CONF	10%	CONF	
YA Librarian - Main Library	x		CONF	15%	CONF	
YA Librarian - Branches	x		CONF	15%	CONF	
<i>Fringe Benefits (28% total salaries)</i>		x				
Total Library Staff					\$66,427	28.2%
Trainings (40 hours annually)						
Staff Trainers	x		\$24/hr	80 hr/yr	\$1,920	
<i>Fringe Benefits (10% total salaries)</i>		x			\$538	
Professional development (training, conferences, travel)	x		\$6,000	annually	\$6,000	
Materials		x	\$100	annually	\$100	
Food		x	\$20/session	10 sess/yr	\$200	
Total Trainings					\$8,758	3.7%
Materials and Supplies						
Office Supplies		x	\$300	annually	\$300	
Total Materials and Supplies					\$300	0.1%
Overhead						
Overhead	x		\$60,000	annually	\$60,000	
Total Overhead					\$60,000	25.5%
TOTAL COST FOR COMPUTER AIDE PROGRAM					\$235,677	100.0%
GRAND TOTAL PER SITE (@ 2 Aides per site)					\$39,280	16.7%
Total In-Kind Support					\$176,152	74.7%
Total Budgeted Program Costs					\$59,525	25.3%
Total In-Kind Support Per Site					\$29,359	12.5%
Total Budgeted Program Costs Per Site					\$9,921	4.2%