



**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 2015, 9:30 A.M.
ROBERT E. HIBBITTS MEETING ROOM
1924 COURTHOUSE, NEWTON, N.C.**



The Board accepted and appropriated grant funds in the amount of \$117,919 to the Catawba County Library from six separate grants: Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) Literacy and Lifelong Learning Grant; LSTA Project Access and Digitization Grant; LSTA EDGE Initiative Grant; Latino Americans/American Library Association/National Endowment for the Humanities Grant; National Endowment for the Arts; and Catawba County United Arts Council BIG READ Grant.

On June 15, 2015, the Board adopted the Catawba County Library Strategic Plan that lays out priorities for 2016 through 2019. Three major goals embedded in the strategic plan, driven by the results of a comprehensive community needs assessment and intensive input process, include: 1) As a Community Center of Excellence, Fuel Citizens' Passion for Reading, Personal Growth and Learning; 2) Innovate to Provide 21st Century Access that Empowers Citizens; and 3) Library Anytime, Anywhere: Expand Citizens' Access to Information and Ideas.

With increased reliance on libraries during times of economic downturn, the plan focuses on enhancing County libraries' role in serving as community centers, increasing libraries' capacity to provide the technology, digital resources and personnel to bridge the digital divide for citizens, and increasing outreach and collaboration in the community to engage and empower citizens with resources, services and collections. To that end, the Library has already begun leveraging resources towards some of these strategies, pursuing and securing several grants that advance specific strategies in alignment with the overarching strategic plan, as follows:

Priority Strategy #3: Creation of TechConnect spaces to expose citizens to state-of-the-art technologies while ensuring underserved populations have access. To get this initiative started, the Library secured the **LSTA Literacy and Lifelong Learning grant from the State of North Carolina in the amount of \$20,495** to create one digital learning space for citizens to get hands-on experience working with emerging technologies. Through this grant, the Library will aid citizens in improving their digital literacy and obtaining real-world experience with professional design and engineering tools. The Western Piedmont Council of Governments will partner by imbedding a career specialist at the Library four hours per week, providing career guidance and training to citizens. The library will draw on local engineering expertise through a partnership with the Manufacturing Solutions Center, offering access to professional tools, software applications and training. The grant requires a local match of \$2,049, which will be funded from the Library reinventing budget.

Priority Strategy #4: Conduct literacy outreach activities to ensure children start school ready to learn and positioned to excel; enhance and support active learning for children. To this end, the Library secured the **LSTA EDGE Initiative grant in the amount of \$5,000**, with no match required, to address the early digital literacy of its youngest patrons with the purchase of a Smart Table (touch screen computer table) preloaded with interactive educational software. This project contributes toward the following Library outcome: *Catawba County pre-school children participating in the Library's early literacy programs will be better prepared for school and their caregivers will be better equipped to develop their vital early literacy skills.*

Priority Strategy #5: Conduct Adult Outreach / Programming to bring library resources to where people are, including non-traditional locations and targeting underserved audiences. While it is not possible to fully implement this initiative without additional staff resources, the Library is being creative in identifying one-time initiatives and securing grant funding to begin moving in the desired direction. The Library secured the **National Endowment for the Arts grant in the amount of \$11,800** to partner in the community for a Big Read, a countywide reading initiative to encourage the community to rediscover the classic novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" and engage in its themes of morality and racial equity. This program is being conducted in partnership with libraries of Lenoir-Rhyne University and CVCC, Hickory Public Library, Green Room Theatre and Catawba County Historical Society. A keynote speaker, several book discussions throughout the community, theater performances and history exhibits are all part of this program. Free copies of the book will be distributed throughout the county. The grant requires a local match of \$11,800 which will be matched with Library and partner agencies' in-kind contributions. Additionally, the Library secured a **Catawba County United Arts Council grant of \$5,000**, with no required match, to augment the project with extra copies of the book to distribute to the community.

Further, steps taken to strategically re-work existing positions have made it possible to carve out a part-time position to begin conducting Spanish language outreach and programming

Aligned with this strategy, the Library has secured the **\$3,000 grant from the American Library Association / National Endowment for the Humanities** to bring “Latino Americans”, a nationwide public programming initiative that supports the exploration of the rich and varied history and experiences of Latinos, who have become the country's largest minority group (with over 50 million people). Grant funds will provide a guest speaker, art exhibit, six screenings of a Latino Americans Documentary, bilingual story time for children and a Halloween festival. This project contributes to the following Library outcome: *Catawba County citizens will have access to culturally and intellectually diverse opportunities to enhance their lifelong learning; as evidenced by at least 85 percent of adults who participate in Library programs or check out materials reporting that they have increased their knowledge or discovered culturally diverse or interesting reading or viewing materials.* There is no local match requirement for this \$3000 grant.

Priority Strategy #9: Create welcoming, vibrant, comfortable, and secure Library spaces to position branches as a desirable place for citizens to spend time. In pursuit of this strategy, the Library secured the **LSTA Project Access and Digitization grant in the amount of \$72,624** to install Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology at Claremont, Conover, Maiden, and Southwest branch libraries. RFID technology increases patrons’ access to Library materials by improving inventory tracking, enhancing materials security, and enabling patrons to use self check in and checkout stations, which in turn increases staff productivity and frees up more time for staff to focus on improved individualized customer service. This project will complete the initiative started last fiscal year (also with the assistance of LSTA funding) to install this technology at Main, St. Stephens, and Sherrills Ford-Terrell branches. The grant requires a minimum \$24,208 match, which will be funded from the Library reinventing budget.

The Board’s Finance and Personnel Subcommittee recommends acceptance and appropriation of these grant funds.

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