Getting Started with the LSUCTC Toolkits

Introduction

Welcome to ALSC’s Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers Committee Toolkits! Relationships are at the heart of library work. Relationships within each community can help inform staff about populations they are serving and provide opportunities for feedback loops, ultimately informing decisions and positively impacting library services.

Often there are populations within communities identified as “underserved.” These populations can be marginalized, resulting in less opportunities. Identifying and connecting with underserved populations can inform decisions on library staffing, programming, collections, and a variety of other areas.

How Do Libraries Know Which Communities Are Underserved?

Underserved populations are those not currently receiving library services, or with services that are not fully meeting the needs of the community. For example, our current toolkits focus on underserved populations generated and informed by ALSC members. These include Spanish-speaking populations, Homeless and Financial Insecurity, Autism and Sensory Processing Disorders, Access to Technology, Children with Print Disabilities, and New Americans. Our list is not exhaustive and is intentionally dynamic. We encourage each individual organization to survey and speak to their own community before creating new programs and services.

Do you have a specific, identified need generated from conversations or feedback from individuals in an underserved population within your community? Have you made a goal based on these conversations? The LSUCTC toolkits are a great place to start achieving your goal!

How to Use the Toolkits

The purpose of these toolkits is to give everyone a place to jump in, no matter how you and your organization are currently working with underserved populations. There are certainly similarities to our approach when it comes to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all. However, there are many resources and targeted programs that can be used for specific communities. This work is never a “one size fits all”. The examples provided in each toolkit are intended to inspire you to connect with your community, build trust, and find resources/partners in connecting children and families to each other. Follow these flowcharts to help you get started:

Please share additional suggestions, updates, or thoughts: lsuctc@gmail.com.
Questions to Consider

Community Research
- Who can I ask for feedback? Try to engage staff/public in all positions.
- Who can I talk to and/or collaborate with inside or outside the library? Schools or local groups?
- Who is missing from my library?
- What is the biggest need for the community right now?

Available Resources
- What resources and barriers are in place right now? Be specific.
- Where can I connect on social media or elsewhere?
- Where can I go, like focus groups or personal invitations to connect? Try to compensate for their time.

Professional Development
- What webinars or online courses are available? Look at local, state, and national resources.
- What library resources currently exist? Consider state and national organizations.
- What resource sharing groups can I join?
- What community organizations might offer training or support?

Self-Reflection
- What is my current capacity?
- What level of support do I have from my colleagues and management?
- What step feels like an actionable starting point?
- What is currently working in my library? What is not working?

Identifying First Steps
- Programs and service design: What is the type, scope, and breadth of programming I can offer?
- Communications and marketing: How will I engage with multilingual users within and outside the library?
- Library collections: What types of materials do we have available in our physical and online resources?
- Stakeholders and partnerships: What is the demographic, community, and political context of my library?
- What is my library’s role within that context?
- Equipping staff: What staff training and recruitment practices will empower my staff to serve diverse communities?

Programs and Service Design
- What in-building programs can I offer? Think about storytime, family programs, one-time events, and program series.
- What programs can I offer outside the library? Think about outreach, partnerships, and unique locations.

Communications and Marketing
- What language needs currently exist in my community?
- What staff or resources do I have to support those languages?
- What publishers or vendors offer materials in those languages?
- How does my community prefer to receive information (email, verbal, posters, social media, etc.)?

Library Collections
- Conduct a diversity audit on a portion (or all) of the collection. What trends do I see? What gaps can I identify?
- What year-round diversity materials can I highlight in book displays?
- What materials can I feature in a book or resource list?
- What outlets can I use to promote the library’s collections?

Stakeholders and Partnerships
- What are my library’s existing partnerships?
- What areas of overlap or collaboration exist in serving this population?
- Who can I add to my network of professional connections?
- What other libraries can I connect with for ideas or resources?

Equipping Staff
- What best practices can I implement at my library?
- What are the current gaps and needs in our existing staff training?
- What targeted training or tools can I create for staff?
- What conversations need to be started?
- What questions do I need to ask?

Self-Reflection
- What gaps still exist? Is there still more work to do?
- Do I have the support and capacity to continue this work? Do I need a break?
- What victories do I need to recognize and celebrate?
- What positive progress has been made?

Created by ALSC Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers Committee, 2022

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Getting Started With the LSUCTC Toolkits

Do you want to know what toolkits are available?
- Each toolkit provides up-to-date resources for working with underserved populations. Visit the LSUCTC Toolkit to see all available populations: bit.ly/LSUCTCToolkit.

Do you want to know more about the population?
- Start with About this population. Learn the historical context, statistics, or other useful information about the specific population.

Do you need books to read or share?
- Start with Recommended read alouds. Find picture books related to this population that you can share during library programs, featured book lists, or displays.

Do you need apps to support this population?
- Start with Recommended apps. You can find apps (or resource lists) with tools to support the population.

Do you need suggestions for professional development?
- Start with Professional resources. You can find books, articles, websites, and webinars to help develop your context and further understand this population.

Do you need suggestions for sources for materials?
- Start with Publishers and vendors. You can find recommendations for suppliers who focus on this population.

Do you need ideas for programming?
- Start with Materials for programming. You can find links for items that support programming and services for this population.

Do you need ideas for library’s spaces?
- Start with Materials for the children’s room. You can find links to items that can support your spaces and access for this population.

Do you need suggestions for community support?
- Start with Community resources. You can find national, state, and local resources to support your library’s efforts.

Would you like to see successes from other libraries?
- Start with Successful library programs. You can find examples of the work that other libraries are doing and reach out to learn more.

Do you have suggestions, updates, or thoughts?
- Email our committee at LSUCTC@gmail.com. We’d love to hear from you!

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Sample Resources

**Recommended Read Alouds**


An immigration story woven into the curiosity of a young girl seeking her roots. Friends and family share stories about the island they called home and why her family had to leave.

*From the Spanish Speaking Populations toolkit

**Recommended Apps**

Common Sense Media. *Fun Apps That Don't Need Wi-Fi or Data*

These apps don't need Wi-Fi or data plans to run. Load them onto tablets that can be loaned to families who have limited data or Wi-Fi access.

*From the Access to Technology toolkit

**Materials for the Children’s Room**

**Silly Shapes Sensory Mats**

These fun, textured mats provide kids with a totally unique sensory experience. Five mats each have a different raised surface, and each mat comes with a smaller matching circle.

*From the Autism and Sensory Processing Disorders toolkit

**Materials for Programming**

**Mini Chick Hand Puppet**

Librarian Pura Belpré is known for telling beautiful stories with puppets. Consider pairing this puppet with the song “Los pollitos.”

*From the Spanish Speaking Populations toolkit

**Publishers and Vendors**

**AAPC Publishing**

AAPC Publishing focuses on supporting those with autism spectrum disorder with resources to support individuals, families, and professionals. They offer resources that support inclusive environments for neurodiversity.

*From the Autism and Sensory Processing Disorders toolkit

**Professional Resources**

**New Americans Library Project**

Includes recommendations and programming ideas for libraries serving New Americans. Explore the research behind the project and find specific applications for your library.

*From the New Americans toolkit

**Community Resources**

**Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force**

A collection of professional resources - including books, articles, websites, and grants - provided by the Social Responsibilities Round Table for librarians supporting communities affected by hunger, poverty, and homelessness.

*From the Financial Insecurity and Homelessness

**Successful Library Programs**

**Skokie Public Library: Supported Cooking**

This cooking workshop is for families with school-age children who have disabilities. Participants should be able to hold cooking utensils and follow step-by-step instructions. We will provide ingredient and supply lists, as well as visual supports, to those who register.

*From the Children with Print Disabilities toolkit

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Everyday Advocacy

Feeling Overwhelmed?
Not sure where to start? Check out "Overwhelmed by: Advocacy," a post from the ALSC blog that helps define a starting place for advocacy in your organization. Read the full post here: https://bit.ly/OverwhelmedAdvocacy.

Focus on Authenticity
Perspective and intention matter in this work. Focus on how individuals are underserved by the library, but be careful that you are not assuming unseemly needs of viewing communities as being or having less than. For a great look at this in action, check out Melody Leung's outreach to migrant communities: https://bit.ly/MigrantOutreach.

Take a Social Justice Approach
Advocating for underserved communities requires closing gaps and allowing all families to benefit from the library’s resources. Putting your communities’ goals and desires at the heart of your efforts will create more meaningful impact. Consider the social justice framework from Project VOICE and their associated resources: https://bit.ly/3xCD1aa

Go Beyond the Library
Literacy services can include efforts inside and outside the building. Consider opportunities to connect with underserved populations. For ideas of how to step outside the library and connect with more families, check out Dekalb County Public Library’s Literacy Outreach Services: https://bit.ly/DekalbLiteracy.

Develop Partnerships
How can we serve underserved communities authentically? One answer is by forging partnerships with those who are already building trust. Learn how to find partners and evaluate your success, including partnership examples, in this Children and Libraries article from Melody Leung and Marika Jeffrey: https://bit.ly/ItTakesTwoOrMore.

Reach Patrons Where They Are
If patrons can’t come to you, look for ways that you can bring the library to them. You can start outreach with something as small as circulating kits. For ideas and inspiration, check out “No- and Low-Tech Backpacks as Outreach,” a post from the ALSC blog with examples of different groups you can reach with circulating kits and backpacks. Read the full post here: https://bit.ly/BackpacksAsOutreach

Be Accessible
Accessibility services make your library materials, programs, and services more reachable for patrons with special needs like low vision, hearing loss, limited mobility, or neurodivergence. For inspiration, check out the Accessibility Services from Bloomfield Township Public Library: https://btpl.org/services/other-services/.

Be Culturally Inclusive
Libraries are welcoming spaces for all members of our community, and we can provide opportunities for learning and connection across many cultures. From citizenship and immigration services to English conversation, there are many ways to connect. For examples, check out Denver Public Library’s Cultural Inclusivity page: https://www.denverlibrary.org/ci/index.

Celebrate Literacy and Diversity
Dia is a nationally recognized initiative that emphasizes the importance of literacy for all children from all backgrounds. It is a daily commitment to linking children and their families to diverse books, languages, and cultures. Find reading lists, graphics, programming support, and more on their website: http://dia.ala.org/

Provide Access to Technology
Does your community struggle with access to technology or digital connectivity? Hotspot lending may be one option to connect patrons with resources. Reach out to libraries in your area to see what opportunities exist, or check out New York Public Library’s program for one example: https://www.nypl.org/hotspot.

Provide Free Resources
Reaching families with financial insecurity and homelessness starts by providing much-needed resources. Access to technology and resources is one way libraries bridge those gaps. For an example of meeting immediate needs, check out Los Angeles Public Library and their homework centers: https://bit.ly/HomeworkCenters.

Meet Patrons in Unique Ways
For patrons who can’t easily access your library, consider taking your library to them. Outreach programs and bookmobile services allow you to meet patrons where they are. For one example, check out the Queens Public Library bookmobile: https://bit.ly/QueensBookmobile

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Reflection and Evaluation:

Once you dig into the toolkits and find inspiration to expand on your own programs and services, we invite you to reflect on your experience while keeping the community at the center of what you do.

Sometimes when planning programs, we see them as individual entities. We may obtain statistics or evaluations at the end of a program or series and use it to guide future programs. Instead of focusing on the efforts of one program, we encourage you to think about the program as one of a wealth of resources that your library can provide.

Reflection Questions

What was the impact of the initiative/program/outreach that you executed?

How was the initiative/program/outreach received by the community? (ex. Community feedback, surveys, conversations)

What aspects could have been improved? What external factors may there have been that prevented this from happening? For example, maybe the audience was not what you were intending to invite. Were there marketing improvements that may need to be made? (ex. translated posters, location of marketing, etc).

If improvements above were made, how might it change the initiative/program/outreach?

What support do you need in order for these improvements to happen? (ex. Budget, marketing, staffing, partnerships)

Please share additional suggestions, updates, or thoughts: lsuctc@gmail.com.
We hope our resources can inspire and empower you as you are working with underserved communities. Our toolkits and resources have been informed by countless practitioners around the country and we plan to keep them updated as we learn more.

For all of our current toolkits and “Getting Started” handouts, please visit us here:

https://bit.ly/3D0UsPW

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