

County of Riverside - Library Connect Executive Summary

Overview - Library Connect delivers enhanced mobile library services to Riverside County. Literacy and STEAM programs, computers, Wi-Fi and library resources can now easily reach underserved communities.

Challenge - The challenges for mobile library services within the Riverside County Library System (RCLS) ranged from staffing limitations to unsustainable and unreliable bookmobiles that serve over 2 million people in many remote and rural locations. For over 20 years, RCLS had two transit style busses that were converted into bookmobiles. These vehicles were scheduled for daily stops where patrons could check out books, use computers, printers and Wi-Fi. The bookmobiles covered over 7,300 square miles through some of the toughest terrains with added strain from the weight of books and equipment. The wear and tear on the bookmobile required regular monthly maintenance, upwards of \$50,000 a year. Tending to the unreliable mechanics of the bookmobiles took away from focusing on the mission and needs of the patrons. Outside of the increasing monetary costs, the customization and footprint of the bookmobiles limited the type of library programming offered to the patrons. Finally, staffing of the bookmobiles was challenging as the bookmobile drivers were required to have a California Class A driver's license along with several years of experience. Bookmobile could not run during a driver's absence.

Solution - The solution to these challenges was to provide mobile library resources in smaller, more reliable vehicles, while increasing the number of locations and programming options. RCLS purchased two Ford Transit vans, with two more in the planning stages, and had them customized and retrofitted to create a state-of-the-art mobile library vehicle, called Library Connect. Drivers of the van only require a California Class C driver's license, which allows access to many qualified drivers. The interior was redesigned with flexibility in mind, providing a space for mobile book carts, equipment, STEAM kits, and computers. Facilitating the ease of loading and offloading, the vans also reduce fuel costs and minimize

the overall wear and tear on the vehicle and maintenance cost. The vans can also access more remote and rural parts of Riverside County.

Innovation - The innovation of the Library Connect model is the ability to bring high demand programming to the patrons in their communities. The programming improvements have something to offer everyone that visits Library Connect. Children and families benefit from STEAM programming and the educational enrichment programs offer patrons an opportunity to secure employment in the 21st century workforce. Programs such as digital literacy, financial literacy, citizenship classes, resume and cover letter assistance, and adult one-on-one and group learning sessions will support and inspire patrons to become lifelong learners.

Results - The Library Connect program has established more partnerships with other County agencies than the bookmobile did in its entire time of operation. During this journey RCLS has networked and formed relationships with the California State Library, First 5 Riverside County Children & Families Commission, Riverside County - County Service Areas, Desert Recreation District, and Riverside County Workforce Development. Through these networks, the library has found ways to reach and share valuable resources to underserved and rural communities.

Replicability - This program can be replicated by other counties just getting started or already utilizing mobile library services. RCLS staff have been producing materials for the California State Library that document the Library Connect vehicle design, cataloguing components that provide the most value for programming and providing budget advice and highlighting the on boarding process for their use in the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant funding.

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Marketing Submission - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpWyb7TLrPM>