

Wal-Mart Mini-Grant Process and Recipients

In November 2008, the Wal-Mart Foundation provided \$98,000 in one-time funds to support the "Strengthening Library Services for Youth in Idaho" project. This grant was the result of a collaborative effort between the Idaho Library Association, First Lady Lori Otter, the Idaho Community Foundation, and Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICFL), with funds to be distributed via ICFL through a competitive mini-grant process open to all Idaho publicly-funded public libraries. "Strengthening Library Services for Youth in Idaho" was designed to encourage creative thinking and new approaches in order to provide innovative services and help libraries reach more youth from birth to age 18 and their families.

Response to the Wal-Mart Mini-grant was overwhelming and the numerous excellent proposals that were submitted made the competition intense and the selection challenging. Fifty-three proposals were submitted, requesting a total of \$308,000. With the available funding of \$98,000, ICFL was able to fund about 25% of the proposals. In general, funded proposals presented new and creative services; demonstrated community need and strong partnerships; provided evidence of planning, specific details about project activities, and an effective plan for reaching their target audience; and demonstrated how the project could be continued. Following are an overview of the Wal-Mart Mini-Grant process and a summary of the funded proposals.

The Review Process

The proposal review process took place in February 2009 and the panel consisted of five reviewers: an ICFL projects coordinator, three ICFL staff members with a variety of grant experience, and a staff member from the Idaho Community Foundation. Each application was read and scored by three reviewers: the ICFL projects coordinator read and scored all 53 proposals and the other two readers were randomly assigned to each grant application. Two additional ICFL projects coordinators read all applications, attended the review meeting, and served as consultants in the review process. Their scores were available to factor into the score averages if a tie-breaker was needed. Throughout the process of reading and scoring the proposals, all correspondence was conducted via email to the entire panel so that everyone was working with the same information and the evaluating was kept as consistent as possible.

The Review Meeting

At the review meeting, the proposal scores were collected and averaged. The review panel and the two additional projects coordinators went through the proposals, averaging each of the three scores and discussing the top scorers. The proposals were then ranked from highest scores to lowest, with funding being awarded until it ran out and partial funding offered to the next library on the list. After much earnest evaluation, scoring, and discussion, the following projects were funded.

Funded Projects

Cognitive and Constructive Play

- Garden City Public Library—Cognitive and Constructive Play (0-12) —\$4,000 for [personnel, library materials, equipment, supplies, and publicity](#). The library will partner with Head Start and Early Head start to target underserved, English Language Learners (ELL), refugee and low-income families through the following:
 - developing a collection of high-quality educational toys that encourage cognitive development and build early literacy skills
 - developing programming around the use of these toys by incorporating them into weekly storytimes, current outreach programs, and a new toddler/child play times
 - loaning the materials to organizations like Head Start, family literacy programs, local schools and daycares

Early Learning

- Post Falls Public Library—Early Learning: Puppets and More Outreach (0-12)—\$7,000 for [personnel, library materials, electronic and other equipment, publicity supplies, and travel expense](#). The library will establish "Early Learning: Puppets & More," a new, multifaceted program to expand and enhance library outreach services to young children and their families through a variety of venues and formats, including:
 - developing and producing lively puppet/storytime presentations that feature the six early literacy skills

- presenting live shows at childcares
- videotaping shows and making them accessible electronically through the library's website
- Circulating pre-reading kits that include DVDs of the puppet shows, finger puppets, a mini-puppet theater, books and other hands-on materials

English Language Learners

- Boise Public Library —Reaching Immigrant Families: Preschoolers and Parents—\$10,000 for contractual fees for staff training and program plans, personnel, library materials, supplies, and publicity. The library will offer storytimes—designed specifically to improve and promote English-language literacy—at the main library and branch libraries to preschoolers and their parents for whom English is a second language. The six-week long workshop series storytimes will do the following:
 - provide participants with opportunities to develop and advance English language skills and to interact with others using English
 - focus on concepts in simple English, utilizing storybooks, music, images, and other materials
 - offer supporting materials for checkout to participating children and caregivers so they can continue to develop their language and literacy skills at home between storytimes

Technology (with emphasis on teens and tweens)

- Ada Community Library—Learning Resources for Tweens and Teens—\$10,000 for contractual fees for tutor and reference subscriptions, library materials, electronic equipment, supplies, and publicity. The library will enhance teen services by offering:
 - online homework assistance through Tutor.com (to be available on a newly designed homework help web page)
 - text messaging reference service
 - access to qualified tutors in a variety of subject areas (in partnership with BSU)
 - a dedicated study area equipped with innovating teaching equipment and resources (at main and Star Branch)
 - circulation of flip video camcorders
 - a series of educational programs through a partnership with 4H of Ada County
- Boundary County District Library, Bonners Ferry—Teen Services: Online Magazine and Writing Workshops—\$5,000 for contractual fees for workshop presenters, library materials, and supplies. The library will work with its project partners, including local middle and high schools, to involve youth in creative learning experiences that support academic achievement and workforce training with the following activities:
 - holding a series of writing workshops for students in the 6th – 12th grades
 - developing a special writers' reference collection for youth to use at either the public or school libraries
 - teaching participants to develop and manage their own online magazine
 - exposing participants to a wide range of writing applications under the direction of a team of professional writer-educators and successful entrepreneurs
 - teaching youth strategic planning and how to craft a marketing plan and/or a grant application for future funding of the project
- Burley Public Library—Video Gaming for Teens—\$5,000 for contractual fees, library materials, electronic equipment, supplies, and publicity. The library will establish video gaming, which will be linked to academic achievement through partnership with area schools, and includes the following:
 - bi-monthly gaming tournaments with books as prizes
 - extra gaming time to students who maintain their grades
 - extra gaming time to students who need extra motivation to attend school or improve tardiness
 - books that connect video gaming with reading added to the collection
- Coeur d'Alene Public Library – Gaming Programs for Tweens and Teen—\$7,000 for personnel, electronic and other equipment, supplies, and publicity. The library will create a series of 10 themed "Let the Games Begin" programs with the specific purpose of strengthening 21st Century technology skills, which will involve the following:
 - forming a teen advisory groups to advise on programs and materials
 - pairing teens with senior citizens through a mentoring program tied to gaming and computer use

- including some intergenerational gaming programs
 - adding material tied to electronic gaming to the collection
- E. Owyhee County District Library, Grand View—New Programming for All Ages—\$10,000 for personnel, library materials, electronic and other equipment, supplies, and publicity. The library will provide three new types of weekly or monthly programming:
 - Little Learners (0-5) – weekly program including music, movement, puppets, fingerplays and activities. The library will also take this program to a local daycare.
 - Learning Ever After (5-12) – weekly after-school activities that will highlight books and reading along with cognitive activities such as photography, health, food, handicrafts, wildlife, robotics, and theater skills. Every quarter, an evening family event will spotlight skills and talents the youth have developed.
 - Teen Supreme (13-18) – monthly evening structured activities will include robotics, electronic gaming, digital photography, video production, scrapbooking, and specific intergenerational activities involving parents and seniors in the community.
 - Kuna District Library—Gaming Programs for Kids and Teens—\$4,000 for library materials, electronic and other equipment. The library will expand video gaming programs to reach more children (6-9, 10-13, 14+ and families) and then integrate those programs with the children’s and young adult book collections. Book lists will be available to help match a child’s gaming interest to books with similar themes. Highlights include:
 - setting up in a large community room, leaving room for tables around the perimeter for board games, card games, and reading zones.
 - bringing additional gaming magazines into the program room during gaming sessions
 - setting up a gaming wiki where kids can add tips and information about the games they are playing
 - providing materials for kids to create their own games
 - Lewiston City Library—New Teen Space and Publishing Workshop—\$10,000 for contractual fees, personnel, library materials, electronic and other equipment, supplies, capital improvements. The library will create and implement a new Teen Center in the library to invite teens and validate their worth. Phase I of the project is covered by this grant and includes:
 - enhancing the new space carved out of a corner of the library by painting, rearranging shelving, adding furniture, creating a college prep area and creating a gaming area
 - providing a variety of gaming programs for teens
 - incorporating a publishing workshop in their 2009 teen summer reading program, using laptops that will be made available for checkout to all teen patrons
 - Nampa Public Library—Super Saturday Intergenerational Programs—\$2,000 for personnel, supplies, and publicity. The library received partial funding for expand their “Super Saturday” intergenerational programs to include electronic gaming, storytimes, craft and science programs.
 - Oneida County District Library—Reading and Technology for Teens—\$10,000 for library materials and electronic equipment. The library will introduce teens to best-selling young adult books through book reviews and integrating technology and reading materials. Projects for teens to share their reading with others include:
 - computer lab with classes focusing on technology skills
 - developing web pages for book reviews
 - creating blogs
 - downloading audio books and purchase young adult books that correspond to the electronic books for slower and struggling readers

Teen Outreach

- E. Bonner Co. District Library, Sandpoint—Juvenile Detention Center Outreach, Tweens and Teens—\$10,000 for contractual fees, library supplies, equipment, supplies, publicity. The library will work with the staff at the Bonner

County Juvenile Detention Center to expose youth to reading materials and other library services during their detention. Materials and services will include:

- paperback books, books on CD, career and reference materials for in-facility check out
- giveaway books to be distributed as rewards for detainees when they are being released and to probationers by their probation officers
- monthly library and community presenter visits to expose juvenile detainees to services offered by the library and other community agencies

Teen Space

- Cambridge Community Library—New Teen Space, Programs, and Paperback Collection—\$4,000 for personnel, library materials, equipment, capital improvements, and publicity. The library will work with local teens to make the following enhancements to teen services:
 - design programming and activities
 - develop a special area at the library for pre-teens and teens
 - select titles for a paperback turnaround with relaxed loaning practices

Library Response

We are grateful to the Wal-Mart Foundation for funding this generous and beneficial grant. Libraries that received funding for their proposals are excited for the opportunity to strengthen library services for their youth by offering new programs or enhancing existing ones. As Mary DeWalt, Ada Community Library Director put it, they are “thrilled and honored to have been selected as a recipient. . . . We cannot wait to get started on this.”