

## **Outreach Program Plan**

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## **Introduction**

The Eugene Public Library (EPL) serves the city of Eugene, Oregon through three locations. As one of Oregon's major cities, Eugene serves as a core of sports, education, art, music, and a wide variety of other interests for western Oregon, as is reflected by EPL's diverse collections and programs. With a community that tends to be younger, active, and a deeply Democrat island, advancing diversity and wide-ranging knowledge are popular trends among the city's community. EPL prides itself in its support of its community, serving as a local leader and maintaining constant events, activities, and resources for adults, teens, children, and the many diverse and international sub-communities of the city.

One such sub-community that EPL works to support through its collections and programs is the local homeless community, which is far larger than average and numbers an estimated 3,000 people. Presently, EPL primarily supports this community through assistance in finding jobs, and in providing a winter warming center for the homeless when temperatures drop below freezing. In its current state, the winter warming service succeeds in offering a safe haven from dangerous weather conditions, but is minimalistic and gives only limited support to the community. Consequently, the goal of this outreach program proposal is to advocate for an expansion to the current winter service for homeless patrons, expanding its hours of operation to better serve patrons when they need it, and to include more resources that are beneficial and useful for the community as a whole. Because this program has already been operated for several years, its foundational assets are established and awareness of it is present in the target community. Additionally, many of the new resources proposed to be included EPL already has in its possession. What it needs, however, is greater attention to the times at which its intended

audience is most vulnerable and most in need of its services, and implementing more resources, such as books, computers, and other educational assets, to be accessible.

### **Community Profile Narrative**

Eugene, Oregon, is one of the three biggest cities in Oregon with a population exceeding 175,000. It is western Oregon's center for education, sports, culture, art, music, and contains enough parks, rivers, and pathways to keep any hiker or runner busy. Situated at the southern mouth of the Willamette Valley, the city's southern reaches are in heavily forested, steep hills that descend down into flat farmland extending north all the way to Washington. The Willamette River denotes its eastern border, and two peaks overlook the city that have become famous hiking paths, part of the 3,000 acres of public parks and 50 miles of pathways that are in the city (Eugene Cascades and Coast, n.d.-b).

Home to two universities and a community college, and titled TrackTown USA for being the national capital in running, jogging, and track and field, education and sports are very important to the population. A young population with a median of only 35 years old, it is predominantly White (74.8%), followed by Hispanic (10.6%), multi-racial (7.2%), Asian (4%), Black (1.66%), miscellaneous other races (0.65%), and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (0.29%), respectively (Social Explorer; United States Census Bureau).

Of direct importance to this outreach program, there is also a sizable homeless population of an estimated 3,000 individuals—approximately 1.69% of the total population—in the city, and which is the core population for this proposed outreach program (City of Eugene). As of 2019, the population was estimated to be at around 2,165 individuals, at which time it already meant that the city of Eugene had the most homeless per capita in the nation (Adams, 2019). With more current estimates now adding an additional 800 people to this count in only the span of three

years, it is understandable that pre-existing services and organizations are overburdened and unable to accommodate everyone. Estimates purport that 2,000 of the 3,000 people currently homeless in Eugene, for example, lack adequate shelter at night (City of Eugene), even though one of the key services provided by local organizations is to address this very need. Efforts are additionally hampered by the homeless community largely being minoritized by other parts of the city's population, with recurring incidents of drug use and obstructive temporary structures frequently creating friction with homes and businesses. Several organizations in the city are dedicated to assisting the homeless population, but are unable to care for the total needs of the community. However, these organizations are prime candidates for partners in this project, and EPL can benefit greatly from collaborating with these organizations' resources and expertise. Doing so would complement the services EPL already offers to accommodate and support the homeless community, such as internet access, job application support, and limited shelter from dangerous temperatures. It would also support expanding such current features, as is the target of this program plan.

### **Library Profile Narrative**

The Eugene Public Library was originally founded in 1904 as the first Carnegie Library in Oregon, and has been rated by the ALA as a "Star Library" for multiple years (Eugene Public Library). Since its founding, EPL has grown to include two branches located elsewhere in the city, and has expanded its services and resources to accommodate changes in technology and of the city's evolving population. Now, supported by volunteers and the nonprofit organizations Friends of Eugene Public Library and the Eugene Public Library Foundation, among others, EPL provides a wide range of physical and digital materials in multiple languages, and regularly hosts community events (Eugene Public Library, n.d.-a).

EPL does encounter an above-average level of incidents of aggressive and disruptive behaviors, including drug use, by homeless individuals, likely as a consequence of its close proximity to the city's main bus station (Anonymous, 2015). It is hoped that providing services created specifically for the benefit of the homeless community, in addition to encouraging niceties and polite gestures on behalf of library staff, will help improve the relationship between the library and the community, reducing negative instances in turn (Giudice, 2017; Phillips, 2017). Currently, there are only a few services provided by the library which might serve the homeless community as well, of which EPL serving as warming centers during inclement winter weather is the primary one discussed for the homeless community. This service, however, is severely lacking in scope, resources, and the times at which it is offered. Much improvement, therefore, can be done to this service for the benefit of the homeless community.

The expanded warming center service will continue to be held in all three EPL locations, dependent on the identification and availability of suitably large rooms that can be accessed from outside, but closed off from the remainder of the library outside of normal operating hours for security. Due to most of the resources eyed for this expansion already being within EPL possession, excluding additional costs, bedding material, and the option of procuring books pertinent to the homeless community and its education, costs will not be significant. It is hoped that volunteers will compose much of the staffing for the program, although some staff will be necessary, and the hiring of a social worker to work with homeless patrons is recommended, both of which constitute the significant majority of program cost projections.

### **Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives**

In addition to following the Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read statements published by the American Library Association, EPL states that its mission is to support “an informed

community, lifelong learning, and the love of reading by promoting access to the universe of ideas and information to all city residents” (Eugene Public Library, n.d.-b). The library also expresses its goal of upholding diversity within its collections, and lists three core values: lifelong learning and literacy; responsive customer service and empowerment; and organizational and professional ethics (Eugene Public Library, n.d.-b).

The outreach program presented in this proposal is designed in light of the three core values of EPL. It seeks to promote lifelong learning and literacy with the provisioning of books, serials, and other appropriate resources for the target community. In doing so, it hopes to assist in empowering the homeless community by helping them with their needs and providing assistance in education, increasing literacy, and job seeking. Lastly, by extending the current service provided, EPL will reach further in ethically providing for and protecting its patrons and community.

### **Outreach Program**

This planned outreach program aims to perform two synchronous expansions for the present service. One is to extend the currently provided warming center hours that all three locations of the EPL provide in winter. The other is to add additional resources and personnel to this service in order to increase library support of, and rapport with, the target community.

### **Program Aspects**

#### ***Hours of Operation***

Foremost is the extension of the hours the service is currently offered for. Because the chief purpose is to provide a warm, safe space for individuals and families to remain at when weather and temperatures become hazardous, it is only sensible that the library provide this service from evening through early morning—when these factors are most acute. Although these

are not normal operating hours for EPL, neither is providing shelter from dangerous weather a normal operating aspect of the library. Nevertheless, because this is an already provided service addressing the needs and safety of library patrons, EPL should make the appropriate alterations to adequately offer this service at times when it is most needed, rather than most convenient to the library's status quo. Consequently, it is planned that the service will adopt a 24/7 schedule when inclement weather becomes too cold to safely stay in.

### ***Staffing***

The sheltering service will continue to be maintained by library staff and volunteers, with outreach for additional staff to be conducted as well. Creating a position for hiring a social worker would complement this service very well, as well as benefit the library in many other ways, but add a considerable degree to the overall cost, too. Partnering organizations will also be used to give training to current library staff and volunteers, and for additional personnel assistance when possible.

### ***Additional Resources***

In addition to expanding the temporal scope of this service, new resources are to be added as well. Most, however, are already acquired resources of the library which can simply be reoriented and moved appropriately. Computer access is one such resource which will be added so that patrons may be able to utilize EPL's job searching service, perform research of various interests, and locate other resources, among other online tasks. Books, both fiction and non-fiction, as well as serials, will also be provided, including educational books for increasing literacy. Specific titles and materials will be selected at a later date following input from the homeless community and partnering organizations. Not only are these core to promoting EPL's mission and values of encouraging lifelong reading and literacy, but increasing access to reading

materials can have significant improvements on the mental, social, and financial well-beings of homeless patrons, particularly books that promote literacy and job skill growth (Kelleher, 2013; Muggleton, 2013; Willett & Broadley, 2011; Zhang & Chanwer, 2018). Although there may be some families taking part in the service, many of the resources for increasing literacy will be used by teens and adults, and consequently relevant resources oriented for adults, rather than children, will need to be acquired.

### ***Space***

Because the expanded program will extend beyond normal operating hours with only limited staff oversight, most of the library will be inaccessible for security purposes. This necessitates selecting a suitable room or series of rooms in each participating library branch that can be easily accessed from outside, while also able to be sequestered off from the rest of the library outside of business hours. For this same reason, selected resources will need to be moved to the appropriate place, as they will otherwise become inaccessible to patrons once the rest of the library closes. Cots and blankets will be provided, too.

Spaces chosen for this program, as previously mentioned, will need to be easily accessible and visibly denoted from outside so as to be clear during limited visibility and at night. Entering the building to use the program, however, should not identify anyone as homeless, as this risks the possibility of upsetting some homeless patrons, or other patrons who may have negative opinions of them (Venturella, 1991; Willett & Broadley, 2011; Zhang & Chawner, 2018).

### ***Social Behavior***

A final, overarching concept which this program expansion plan aims to promote is as simple as increasing the overall level of kindness and niceties EPL staff present to the homeless



community. EPL has encountered an above-average level of hostile and negative incidents with members of the homeless community that have proven disruptive to staff and other patrons (Anonymous, 2015). Such events have consequently generated negative opinions and views held by EPL staff and patrons on the homeless community as a whole. In order to improve relations between the library and the homeless community, which contains individuals who inherently distrust the library due to its connection to local government, studies have shown that simple acts of kindness, respect, and niceties can transform relations for mutual betterment and reduce future incidents (Giudice, 2017; Phillips, 2017).

### **Statement of Need**

Current services are limited to offering shelter to the homeless community—as well as anyone experiencing a lack of safe shelter—in winter when temperature falls below freezing, and only for a period of no more than ten hours during normal operating hours. Consequently, not only are members of the community exposed to dangerously cold temperatures that may be above freezing but still create risk of death from exposure, but they are also unsupported from evening through to early morning hours, when temperatures are coldest and most dangerous.

Furthermore, in increasing access of educational materials directly to the homeless community, EPL can also advance its efforts of lifelong learning and literacy, and empowering its patrons through knowledge.

### **Program's Target Audience**

Broadly, the target audience of this outreach program is the homeless community of Eugene, Oregon, which is addressed year-round by instituting more welcoming behaviors and niceties for the community. More narrowly, the core of this program is targeting the homeless community during inclement and dangerously cold weather when it is present.

**Estimated Attendance**

It is estimated that attendance figures will remain consistent with numbers currently experienced, with the key difference being the duration of stay. If additional space is allocated to this program, then attendance may rise in correlation with it. To address any possible overflow of attendance that surpasses program capacity, once the maximum number of attendees is reached, individuals will be given directions and/or transport to other local organizations and institutions.

**Audience Description**

Due to the limited facilities and resources of being homeless, some individuals may present issues of body odor and other hygiene issues. Unfortunately, drug use is also rampant among the target audience, and so staff and volunteers will need to be trained on how to properly recognize and treat instances of overdose, safely dispose of such paraphernalia, and how to handle any individuals who refuse to cooperate. Another complicating issue that may come about is the lack of trust some members of the community have towards libraries as government-funded institutions, which may be transferred onto EPL staff as well (Willett & Broadley, 2011; Venturella, 1991; Zhang & Chawner, 2018). Though lumped together as a group identified by their lack of permanent housing, the homeless community is itself very diverse, including people of all races, genders, ages, sexual orientations, and includes many veterans as well as individuals suffering from untreated mental health issues.

**Potential Partners**

Eugene has numerous organizations in operation dedicated to helping the homeless community, most of which are prime candidates for EPL to partner with for this program. The Eugene Mission, ShelterCare, and St. Vincent de Paul are three of the main organizations in the area, with the latter running three services: the Eugene Service Station, Food Assistance, and The

Hub (Eugene Mission, n.d.; ShelterCare, n.d.; St. Vincent de Paul, n.d.). These three possible partners offer a wide range of assistance, from direct material support, to experienced volunteers, to knowledge that can be used to train new volunteers and EPL staff.

White Bird is another major local organization which includes nine separate medical, insurance, mental health, and crisis intervention services (White Bird Clinic, n.d.). Most notably, White Bird operates CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets), an effort which has received national recognition and appraisal, and which has more than fifty years of proven success at diffusing dangerous situations, conflict resolution, substance abuse, non-emergency care, transportation to services, crisis counseling, and other services (CAHOOTS, n.d.). As a well-known institution with a history of cooperating with both the homeless community and EPL, CAHOOTS is a prime option for partnership. Hopefully to provide training, additional volunteers, and assistance or intervention when needed. Because CAHOOTS operates independently of local police, their assistance may also be preferable to some patrons.

Volunteer assistance can also be obtained from the Eugene Public Library Foundation and the Friends of Eugene Public Library. Both organizations already cooperate and support EPL in numerous activities and programs.

## **Library Assets**

### **Already Acquired**

Because EPL already has been performing this outreach program at a smaller scale, the foundations and local awareness of it have already been well established. Many of the new resources which are planned to be incorporated also are already held by EPL, such as serials, books, and computers. Due to the assigned spaces only being used for this program on an as-needed basis for only part of the year, associated materials can either be treated as floaters to

be moved in and out as needed, or, more preferably, kept in the assigned space year-round for easier access to the homeless community.

### **To Be Acquired**

Several acquisitions will be necessary for this program, with additional acquisitions being recommended but not necessary. One essential need will be to purchase new cots and simple bedding material to be used. The purchase of new books and other reading materials is not needed to fulfill this program, albeit acquiring items oriented towards homeless individuals would be beneficial to the population.

Another necessity is finding EPL staff, staff of partner organizations, and volunteers able and willing to monitor the program, and ensuring they are properly trained and prepared. This will possibly be the most challenging aspect of the program to fulfill as approximately half of the shifts involved will be conducted during overnight hours. A final recommended addition would be the hiring of a social worker. Due to the limited weather-dependent span of this program, the position would either need to be part-time and seasonal—which would reduce costs but be more difficult to fill—or have other library duties in a dedicated position.

### **Detailed Action Plan**

**Table 1**

#### *Program Steps for Completion*

Action to be completed	Deadline for completion	Responsibility	Primary resources for completion
Selecting a more suitable space in the library for the program	Mid-October	EPL staff	Time
Establishing partnerships with local organizations	Late September	EPL staff	Time
Move relevant materials into	Late October	EPL staff and	Time

program space, or ensure they are prepared to be moved quickly		volunteers	
Selection and training of staff and volunteers	Begin by early September, will be ongoing	EPL staff	Time, money, and possibly outside instruction
Obtain insight from target community on desirable books and other resources	Late September	EPL staff	Time
Acquisition of needed materials	Late October	EPL staff	Money
Outreach to raise awareness of changing program	Early November	EPL staff and volunteers	Time and money
Activation of program	Dependent on weather conditions	EPL staff and volunteers	Time, money, and partner organizations
Perform observations, headcounts, and mini-interviews	During events	EPL staff	Time
Perform follow-up interviews with patrons	No more than one week following event attendance	EPL staff	Time, money if incentives are added
Evaluation of program	Continuous	EPL staff	Time

### **Program Evaluation Instrument**

Evaluation of the program will be conducted through formative observations, headcounts, and mini-interviews performed during the program, and through summative, fuller interviews conducted outside of the program's activity. Observations and headcounts will be the easiest forms of evaluation to perform, though only creating minimal information and attendance count. Interviews, both mini-interviews done at random while patrons are utilizing the program, and more in-depth interviews held with patrons who agree to be interviewed, will be more difficult to obtain and carry out due to common levels of mistrust in studies and sources of authority (Kelleher, 2013; Willett & Broadley, 2011). However, interviews will also be essential for

accumulating qualitative data on the program, which is paramount for determining its success and future steps. Some sample question drafts for both forms of interview are provided in Appendix A.

In conducting observations, staff and volunteers will maintain notes on paper. Because many patrons will be sleeping during the service, observers should help maintain a low level of volume in the space, as well as ensure that everyone's private property is not intruded upon while they are sleeping. Additionally, if anyone is showing signs of needing medical attention, there should be a prompt response to address their needs. Other things observers should look out for are: patrons who appear lost or are unable to find resources, peoples' moods and how they appear to feel about the service, the number of different patrons who use the new resources and to what degree of interest they appear to have in them, and ensuring that everyone present is comfortable and not behaving antagonistically.

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**Appendix A**

Mini-interview	Interview
Is this your first time using this service?	Did this program meet your expectations?
Have you used any of the additional resources here?	Were any staff or volunteer members exceptionally helpful? Were any unhelpful?
Did you have any difficulties in arriving here?	Would you recommend this program service to other individuals?
Is there anything not here that you were hoping or expecting for?	Do you have any complaints about the program?
Do you feel safe here?	Was there anything present that you don't think is needed?
Do you have any questions?	What would you like to see added or improved upon?