



**HOWARD COUNTY
LIBRARY SYSTEM**
Public Education for All

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Howard County Library System Awarded National Leadership Grant for Libraries by the Institute of Museum and Library Services

(Ellicott City, MD) – Howard County Library System (HCLS) has been awarded a National Leadership Grant for Libraries by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. This planning grant for \$100,000 will fund *Career Pathways for Immigrants*, a new initiative by HCLS’ Project Literacy program which seeks, in part, to address the more specialized workforce development needs of immigrants who have more work skills and training than traditional Project Literacy students. The Maryland Skilled Immigrant Task Force reports that 20 percent of the college-educated foreign-born population is underemployed or unemployed.

“Limited English proficiency is correlated with lower wages and remains a key barrier to the integration of skilled immigrants in the workforce,” said Tonya Aikens, HCLS President and CEO. “We are honored to receive this prestigious grant, which will enable our team to develop contextualized English language classes and strategies to support career pathways for skilled immigrants. We look forward to working with local partners and an Advisory Workgroup, comprising local employers and skilled immigrants, to inform the project. Ultimately, our goal is to open doors to financial independence, self-sufficiency, and thriving families.”

National Leadership Grants for Libraries support projects that address significant challenges and opportunities facing the library and archives fields and have the potential to advance theory and practice with new tools, research findings, models, services, practices, or alliances that will be widely used. The National Leadership Grants for Libraries program received 155 preliminary proposals requesting more than \$40M. Eighty-one projects were invited to submit full proposals, and of these, 38 projects were awarded a total of nearly \$10M, including HCLS.

Project Literacy, HCLS’ adult basic education initiative, has 32 years of success teaching English as a Second Language, math, civics, citizenship, high school diploma preparation, workforce development, and workplace education to more than 10,000 adult students from 43 different countries. More than 90 percent of Project Literacy students are English Language Learners with no or low literacy skills, learning disabilities, and low wage or entry-level jobs.

Career Pathways for Immigrants establishes practices for libraries to strengthen and contextualize English proficiency for work and career pathways so immigrants can achieve better job opportunities that match their professional and educational backgrounds. The success of this program will not only affect the economic self-sufficiency of grant participants, but also multiple generations of Americans.

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