Welcome!



We want to share how your support impacts the Pima County Public Library in an in-depth format.

What better way to start than with an interview with Tess Mayer, PCPL Director, about how the Library and the Foundation work together?



Why are Foundations needed to providing funding for Library programs beyond traditional services?

Foundations are critical in supporting Library programs beyond traditional services because they provide funding for exploring new service directions and approaches that would not be possible within the Library's operating budget. Although public library funding environments differ widely, in general, while there is funding available to fund existing collections and services (and sometimes not even this), there is not discretionary funding to pilot new programs. In addition, Foundation dollars are not necessarily restricted in the same way that government dollars may be. For example, some kinds of technology remain out of reach of the average person and may be prohibitively expensive for a government- funded budget. However, the technology may be very useful or support the development of technological literacy for community members. This could include anything from robotics to 3D printers or Cricuts. We have a positive impact when we can make those tools available to larger numbers of people.



How does the Pima County Public Library (PCPL) and/or Pima Library Foundation (PLF) decide what to fund each year? What factors into that decision?

Libraries develop programs and services in accordance with strategic planning as well as feedback from community stakeholders. Over time, priorities may shift or new possibilities emerge. For example, early in the pandemic, there was a significant push to distribute hotspots and laptops to students. Now, many school districts nationally routinely provide access to laptops, many with built-in internet access. Many jurisdictions have shifted to emphasize creating broadband zones and/or 5G access. Unfortunately, the effort to connect more people to the internet does not rea ch everyone. There remains a need to make Mobile Hotspots available for checkout fro m the Library. While the Library may present options for programs that are a good match with the PLF's goals, they need to resonate with donors' priorities as well. The funding priorities are, in this way, a reflection of the conversation between the Library, the community, PLF staff, and prospective donors.



If funding from PLF were reduced, how would that impact the Library? Conversely, if it increased... ?

If funding were reduced, we would need to eliminate beloved programs such as Career Online High School (COHS), that impact individuals' lives greatly, but are expensive to provide—too expensive for libraries to fund without support. If PLF funding increased, we could innovate through new programming approaches and services to a wider variety of populations and communities.

You've worked with a number of Foundations. From your perspective, is there anything unique, inspiring or challenging about PLF's efforts to fundraise for PCPL?

One of PLF's strengths is its amazing team! There is a wonderful sense of curiosity, commitment, and mutual support amongst PLF team members that is inspiring. I think this is a challenging time more generally for the non-profit sector. There is significant competition amongst different organizations for a limited number of dollars, and a rising level of need in the community. People have a choice when they make charitable contributions, and we need to ensure that they know and understand the impact of their gifts to PLF. The Library is a unique community resource in that it is so flexible—people rely on it in a variety of ways to address not only their needs but their hopes and dreams.

How do you see the relationship between PCPL and PLF growing / changing over the next few years?

We will continue to learn about either organization's strengths and opportunities, as well as challenges. I hope to learn more about our PLF donors/funders, and what inspires them to support libraries. We will grow our partnership in building community capacity—we share a goal of empowering community members through access to resources, programs, learning opportunities, and technology. My hope is that we continue to work together and strengthen our relationship to have a greater collective impact.



Of all the programs PLF is helping to fund this year (COHS, Mobile Hotspots, Staff Scholarships, JDC), is there one that resonates with you personally?

Well… of course I appreciate all of these programs, and it is hard to choose. I am passionate about the role of libraries in serving children and youth and feel strongly that libraries play an important role in supporting our most vulnerable community members. Unfortunately, we know that children of color are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system due to systemic bias. We know that youth that are incarcerated are more likely to experience significant disparities in areas such as health, employment, and education into adulthood. The time when someone is first incarcerated is a critical window in terms of how they will be impacted later. This is a critical time for the Library to provide resources, tools, and growth experiences for youth incarcerated at the Juvenile Detention Center.