

CONTRA COSTA
COUNTY LIBRARY

Bringing People and Ideas Together

ccclib.org

2023 Measure X Project Proposal

Library Department



Introduction

The Library is an essential County service that provides collections, digital resources, programs, facilities, high-speed internet, technology, and staff expertise to meet the lifelong needs of all residents. It provides a link to critical support for early childhood education, safety-net programs, and overall wellness in the community. However, due to the Library’s modest funding, staffing is not sufficient for the Library to meet its fullest potential to benefit county residents.

The Library is requesting \$1.5 million of ongoing Measure X funding for 15 staff positions so the Library can better support and benefit the most vulnerable populations in the county. These added positions will allow the library to develop new services and increase already existing critical services geared specifically to identified low-income communities that are underserved by the Library Department.



Background

Contra Costa County Library consists of 26 libraries in 18 cities and five unincorporated areas throughout the county:

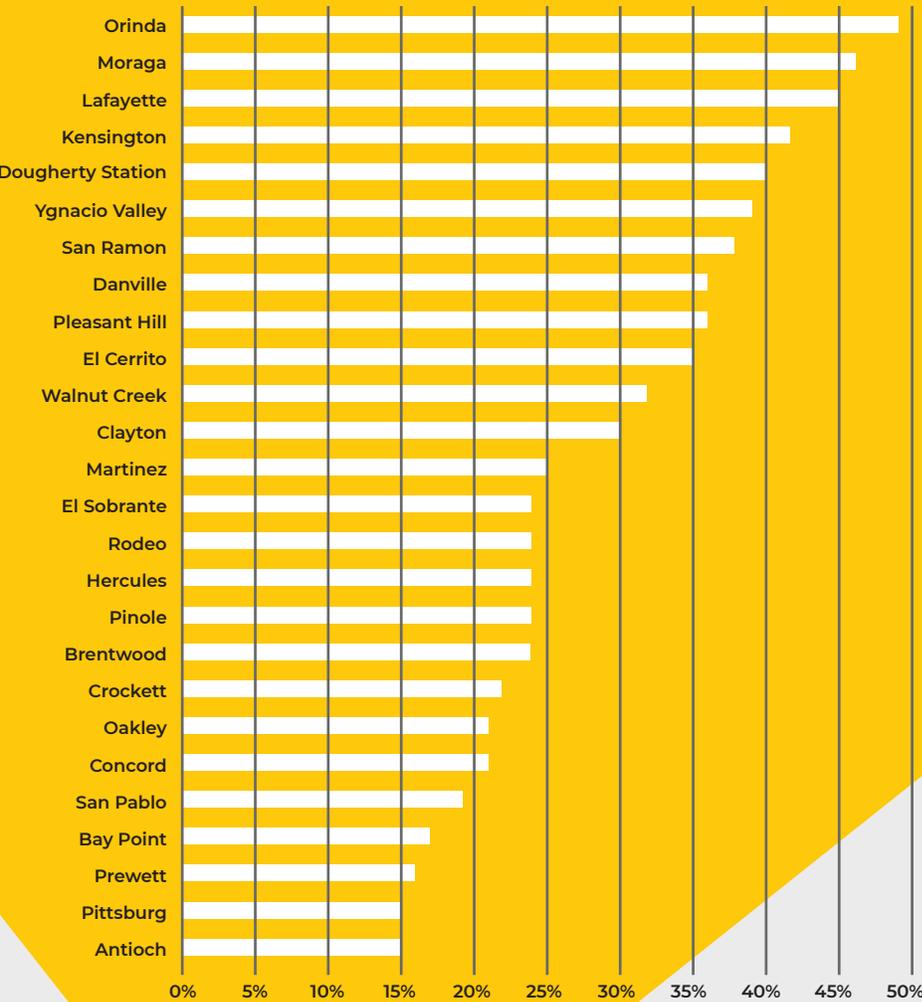
- Antioch
- Bay Point
- Brentwood
- Clayton
- Concord
- Crockett
- Danville
- Dougherty Station (San Ramon)
- El Cerrito
- El Sobrante
- Hercules
- Kensington
- Lafayette
- Martinez
- Moraga
- Oakley
- Orinda
- Pinole
- Pittsburg
- Pleasant Hill
- Prewett (Antioch)
- Rodeo
- San Pablo
- San Ramon
- Walnut Creek
- Ygnacio Valley (Walnut Creek)

Other locations and services include a library inside Juvenile Hall, a robust adult literacy program (Project Second Chance) located in San Pablo, Hercules, Concord, Antioch and Brentwood, and an early literacy outreach program.

Cardholders

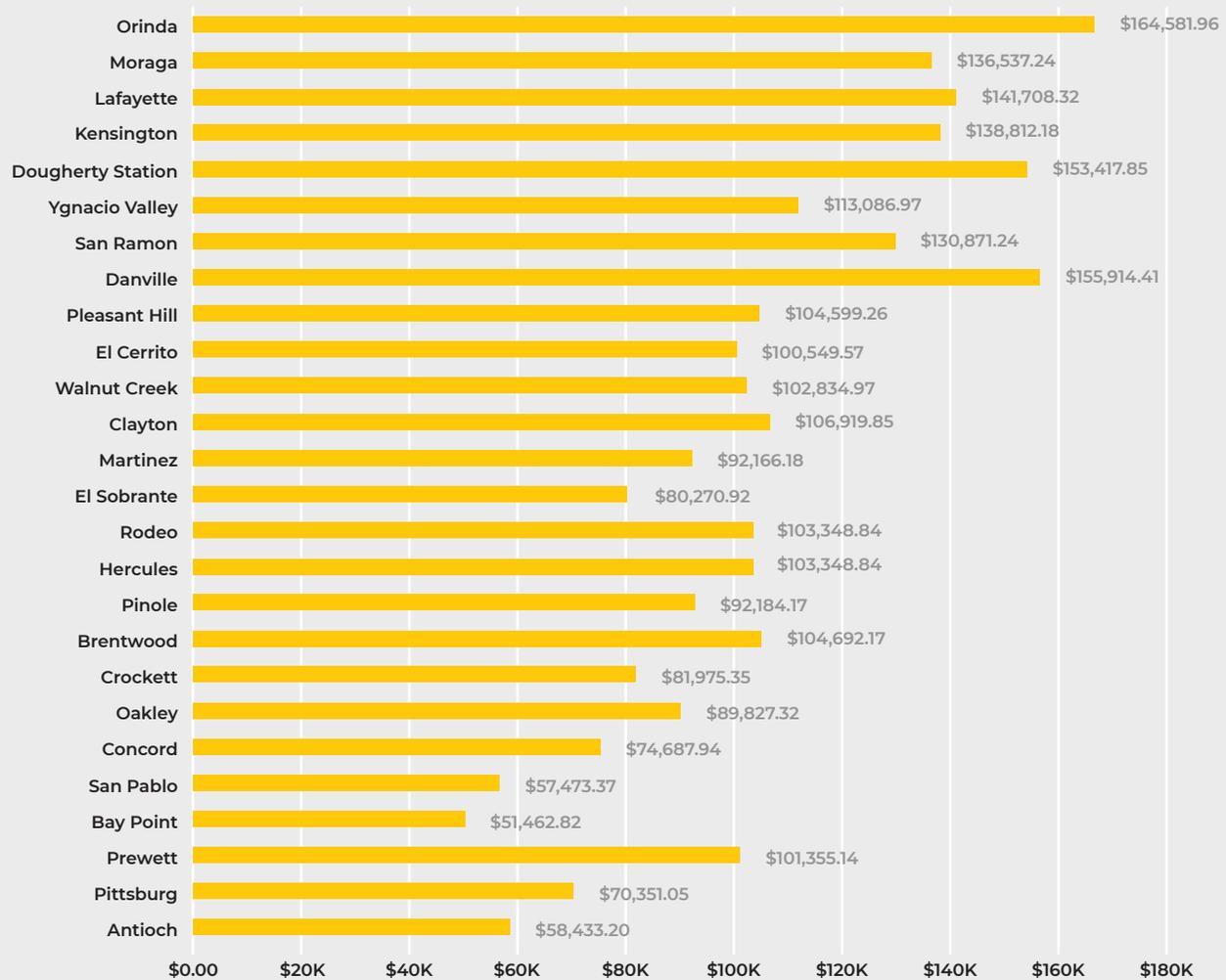
More than 337,000 people have Contra Costa County Library cards, however, there is a significant disparity when looking at who has library cards compared to the average income in each community. Areas with a higher Market Penetration (number of households with at least one active library cardholder) are roughly correlated to areas of higher income.

Market Penetration by Branch



OrangeBoy, Inc. All rights reserved

Median Income by Market Penetration



OrangeBoy, Inc. All rights reserved

This disparity indicates that many low-income or vulnerable residents who could most benefit from the Library's services face certain barriers to using the library regularly such as transportation issues, less free time and most importantly, fewer available library open hours since low-income communities are less likely to have city-funded additional open hours. The following requested positions will help to address these disparities.



Request

\$1.5 million of ongoing Measure X funding for staff will support the implementation or expansion of the following services that will directly benefit underserved residents primarily in low-income areas of the county.

Public Service Branch Positions

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly disrupted education and had a markedly negative impact on reading scores. In Contra Costa County overall reading scores are, on average, down half a grade level. However, low-income students are now behind two grade levels compared to the average student, while students who are not low-income are up by almost one grade. With literacy and reading levels so negatively and unevenly affected by the pandemic, it is critical that the Library increases its efforts to connect families with library resources and services that will improve their children’s reading skills. Library staff are currently working with the County Office of Education to create an action plan to help get students’ reading back on track. These five positions will enable library staff to go to local schools and other community organizations to support the Library’s goal to increase the number of children in the county who are reading at grade-level by third grade.

1.0 Clerk-Senior, 1.0 Library-Assistant, 1.0 Librarian II, 2.0 Librarian I

Student Success Cards

Many students experience barriers when trying to sign up for a library card since they often do not have an ID with their current address or do not have a parent who is available to accompany them to the library to sign them up for a card. The Library’s Student Success Card Initiative allows students to use their school ID as their library card if their school is enrolled in this program. This program was successfully piloted with the Antioch Unified School District and now the Library Department is working with the County Superintendent of Schools to create pathways to implement the program in all nineteen school districts in Contra Costa County. This will require additional IT support since school ID numbers from all school districts will need to be imported and managed in a database that will require regular and ongoing updates and maintenance.

1.0 Network Administrator II

Wi-Fi Hot Spots

Close to 26,000 households in Contra Costa County do not have a broadband internet subscription. The Library currently has 300 lendable Wi-Fi hotspots for at-home use that can be borrowed for three weeks at a time. One hundred of these are “Lucky Day” hotspots dedicated to libraries in low-income communities throughout the county. “Lucky Day” hotspots are not available for online reservations and can only be checked out by walk-in patrons. This keeps these devices available in the communities where there are the lowest rates of at-home internet access. All 300 hotspots are checked out at this writing and 236 people are on the waitlist. Since the Library began lending hotspots in 2021, they have been checked out 6,144 times. This program is very labor intensive and an additional staff person will allow the Library to increase the number of lendable hotspots from 300 to 500.

1.0 Library Assistant-Advanced

Virtual Library

The Virtual Library workgroup is responsible for the web presence of the Library, its online resources and other innovative technologies for the public. Since the COVID-19 pandemic the work of the Virtual Library team has grown exponentially as a result of the public’s expectations for increased online services. The Library now offers extensive online programs, events and classes and will be expanding those resources and creating the option for online library card renewals. With the increased demand for online services and resources, the Virtual Library work group is in need of a dedicated manager who can lead and support these important innovative initiatives.

1.0 Information Systems Program Manager



Racial Equity and Diversity

Since 2013, one of the Library’s strategic goals is to ensure easy, equitable access to library services for all Contra Costa County residents. As such, the consideration of equity is central to all library operations and services. The Library Department significantly increased its focus on equity and diversity starting in 2018 with the creation of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) staff committee. Starting in 2020, the Library Department began providing ongoing racial equity training to all staff and created an additional committee to systematically review and update all departmental policies, procedures and practices using a racial equity lens. The Library’s goal is to become an anti-racist institution so everyone in the county feels welcome, respected, included, and represented at the Library. To further move the organization forward in a systematic and sustained way will require someone who is professionally trained and experienced in this work. This position will help ensure that EDI continues to be at the core of the Library’s values. It will be responsible for EDI continuing education for library staff and promoting collaboration across the library’s units and other county departments. It will serve as a liaison between the County’s Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice and the Library, leading the development and execution of the library’s Racial Equity Action Plan. Along with these tasks, this position will serve as a resource for library leadership, employees, and members of the community.

1.0 Racial Equity and Diversity Officer





Project Second Chance

Project Second Chance (PSC) is the Library's adult literacy program that provides free and confidential basic literacy tutoring to both native and non-native English-speaking adults in Contra Costa County. Tutoring is done by trained volunteers with the support of professional staff. Low literacy is associated with several adverse health outcomes, as well as poorer employment and income outcomes. With over 150,000 residents in Contra Costa County speaking English less than "very well" and a limited number of seats available in adult school and community college ESL programs, there is a demonstrated need for more opportunities for adult community members to learn English. This additional position will allow PSC to double the number of English learners it is currently able to serve annually from 50 to 100 people and will focus on providing services in communities with large Spanish-speaking populations, including San Pablo, Pittsburg, Bay Point, and Concord.

1.0 Library Literacy Assistant-Bilingual Spanish

Human Resources

The Library Department is very sparsely staffed and on average 14 percent of its positions are vacant at any given time. Additionally, on a typical day, there are approximately 15 absences due to illness, vacation, jury duty, or training. This creates an urgent need for vacant positions to be filled as soon as possible so Library services can continue without interruption. The addition of an administrative aide will help to ensure that there are no delays in scheduling and preparing interviews and will ensure vacant positions stay unfilled for the shortest duration possible. Additionally, this position will enable the Library to participate in recruitment events the department doesn't typically attend to encourage a more diverse applicant pool that better reflects the communities of Contra Costa County.

1.0 Administrative Aide



Since the Library Department has a fairly high turnover rate, there is a constant need to train new hires. Each new employee is required to complete between 250 and 300 hours of training, depending on the job classification. Ideally, all training should be completed within the first three months of employment to ensure consistent, high-quality customer service, however, because the Library doesn't have a dedicated training specialist, they often take much longer to complete. There is also a strong need for ongoing continuing education so staff are ready for new services, technologies and initiatives that are introduced on an ongoing basis in order to respond to the ever-shifting needs of the county's residents. All training is currently coordinated by a staff committee with support from library leadership. This model works on a limited basis but does not allow for the development of a long-term, strategic, and thoughtful continuing education curriculum that anticipates the needs of staff and the community. This position will also allow the Library Department to develop a robust career pathway program that will include training new managers, mentoring new librarians and preparing interested temporary staff for a career in libraries.

1.0 Training and Staff Development Specialist

Marketing and Promotions

The Library has an enormous amount of high value resources free to use for all community members. However, the public cannot take advantage of these if they don't know about them. The Library's very first Departmental Community and Media Relations Coordinator (DCMRC) was hired in 2015 in response to overwhelming feedback from the public that the Library needed to market itself better. Since then, the Library's DCMRC has initiated several successful marketing initiatives including elevating the Library's social media presence, writing a monthly library column for the East Bay Times, launching the Library's first television and streaming ad campaign and much more. With 26 branches to cover and hundreds of programs, resources and services to promote, the DCMRC has only scratched the surface of possibilities. Having another marketing and communications position will allow the library to connect and reconnect more residents to the Library's resources and services so no one is left behind. With this additional position the library will be able to promote its resources and events in local recreation guides, municipal newsletters, school newsletters, community newspapers, and will be able to do so in languages other than English. Additionally, the Library will be able to increase its email and social media campaigns, and further cultivate its relationships with local media for a bigger and more consistent presence with local news outlets and channels.

1.0 Community and Media Relations Specialist

The Library collects a tremendous amount of data but does not currently have the capacity to fully analyze and utilize it in order to understand the constantly changing community and library user trends and needs. There are also vast amounts of publicly accessible data that can be harnessed to help the Library Department be more informed about its user base. Data is a powerful tool that, given the right expertise, can help determine what library resources are most needed and help ensure that the Library directs its limited resources where there is the greatest need and on what the community most wants and requires.

1.0 Administrative Services Assistant II

World Languages Collection

The Library's World Languages Collection offers material for adults, young adults, and children in formats that include books, periodicals, and audio-visual materials in Spanish, Chinese, Farsi, Russian and Tagalog. In 2022, the library conducted a diversity audit from which it learned there is a need to significantly increase its Spanish, Chinese and Tagalog language collections and introduce Vietnamese and Korean collections at the San Pablo and San Ramon libraries respectively. Because these materials cannot be ordered pre-processed and catalogued, an additional staff member is needed to support that work. With this additional position, the Library will be able to increase the number of items in its existing World Languages Collections by up to 20 percent as well as introduce a Vietnamese and Korean collection.

1.0 Library Assistant-Advanced



Recommendation

If adequately funded, the Library is uniquely positioned to have a deep and far-reaching effect on addressing disparities in our communities that lead to poorer life outcomes for residents in primarily low-income communities. With additional staffing, the Library will be able to further connect residents to resources that will improve their lives and help them reach their fullest potential. Contra Costa County Libraries are trusted and much-loved institutions uniquely positioned to improve and enhance the lives of the county's most vulnerable residents. With libraries in almost every city and community in the county, combined with the vast number of partnerships that have been fostered over the years, Measure X funding allocated to the Library for additional staff will have an exponentially beneficial and long-term impact for the sustained well-being of Contra Costa County residents.



