

Montana Talking Book Library

Patron Outreach Project

Introduction:

The Montana Talking Book Library (MTBL) Patron Outreach Project (POP) is designed to utilize Montana State Library trust fund resources to reach Montanans who could benefit from MTBL's free digital services. The trust has developed primarily from MTBL patron donations to be used for the purposes of enhancing MTBL services to those we serve and reaching out to those who are eligible but are not aware of available free services.

Purpose:

The Patron Outreach Project proposes to contract with individuals and/or firms to help us address the MTBL awareness and education gaps we have identified. We will need to reach the estimated 22,000 Montanans (reference: American Council for the Blind, 2010) who have low vision, are blind, have a physical or reading handicap. This estimate has increased from 14,000 in 2008.

The population we serve, currently 3,500, represents many Montanans who are limited by income and transportation and thus are often homebound. Their livelihood is primarily television and radio. We can improve their lives by bringing MTBL's free library digital service into the homes of other eligible Montana citizens. Many current patrons refer to our service as "their lifeline" to the outside world. Nearly 50% of who we serve are between 55 and 95 years of age and still live in their own homes, relying on others to assist them.

For school students and residents of nursing homes, independent and assisted living facilities, our free service can support and enhance their lives. By making more individuals, schools and facilities aware of our services on an on-going basis, we can bring a certain level of independence to many while keeping them connected to current topics and event of interest. MTBL's approach to outreach has been limited by the ability to dedicate resources and personnel on an on-going and consistent basis in order to make all who come in contact with eligible individuals, schools and institutions aware of these free services.

Goal/Outcome:

On-going increased awareness of MTBL services and increased patron registrations.

Timelines:

A Request for Proposal for this project will be submitted in mid-June, upon approval to proceed from the Montana State Library Commission. Work with Procurement from mid-June to release RFP in mid to end of July. Award contract in October. Contractor on board and project begins end of October. Contractor to develop and implement a five year outreach plan for a duration of 18 months.

Process:

-Identify and retain existing supporters, access markets to develop and establish new support resources and long term sponsors of MTBL.

-Partner with appropriate Montana individuals, organizations and agencies to create a sustainable MTBL patron outreach program through recruitment and training of volunteers statewide. Partners include patron organizations, clubs (i.e., Lions Clubs of Montana, etc.), civic groups, Ophthalmologists, Optometrists, eye-care support staff, public libraries, veterans groups and facilities, social services agencies, blind and low vision organizations, independent living programs, county health organizations, special education teachers associations, K-12 and College Disability Services, AARP, RSVP, Senior Companions, Red Cross, United Way and other appropriate entities as identified by the contractor.

-Develop PSA's, press releases, brochures, information videos, and other public relation materials and coordinate with internet, television and radio for interviews, ads, calendar events and announcements.

-Interface with MSL and MTBL personnel regarding inter-departmental needs in coordination with MTBL supervisor.

-Develop additional training for staff to handle and process increased patrons.

Costs: \$100,000 requested from Montana State Library Trust Fund.

Submitted by Christie Briggs, Montana Talking Book Library Supervisor, June 8, 2011.