

AZ Librarians Enhancing **RESILIENT** Rural Communities



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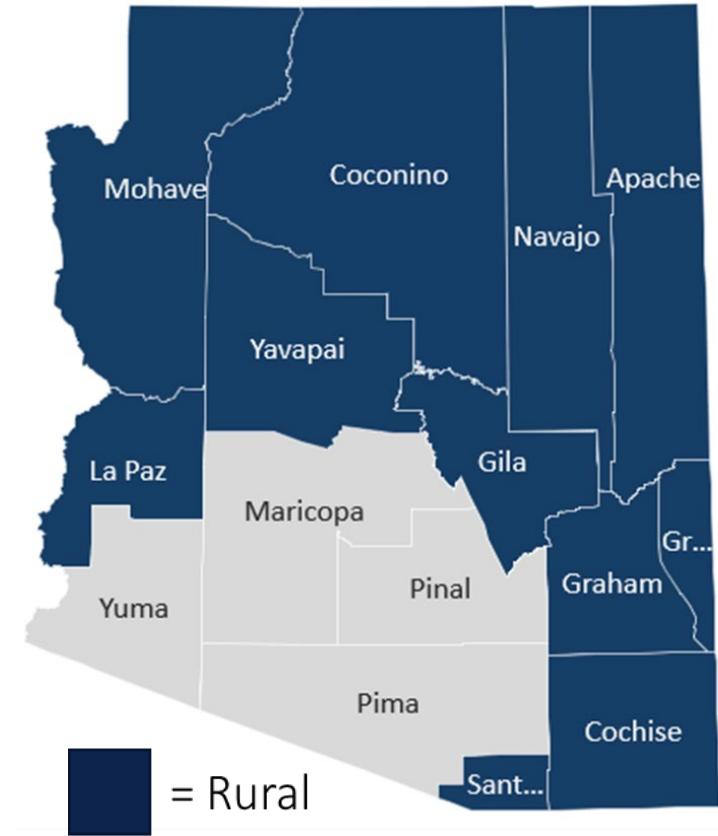
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Session Learning Objectives

- Understand the integral role that rural and small libraries play in their communities.
- Identify strategies and programs that are being implemented by Arizona rural and small libraries to address health inequities.
- Describe challenges faced by Arizona rural and small libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Arizona Landscape

- Population: 7,151,502 (2020 US Census)
- Rurality by population (definitions vary):
 - Ranges from 10-25% depending on definition
 - 10.7% by most recent Decennial Census
 - 7 of 15 counties designated nonmetro by federal sources like the USDA (Apache, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Navajo, Santa Cruz)
- AzCRH Core Mission: *To improve the health and wellness of Arizona's rural and underserved populations.*
- AzLA Mission: *To promote library service and librarianship of all types in the state of Arizona.*



AzDHS Rural Counties

Rural Arizona

Protective Factors

More than Just Books ...

- A safe space for all
- Cooking, nutrition, exercise classes
- Patron outreach (well-check)
- Afterschool snacks for school children; food pantry
- Promoting access to health care and social services
- Welcoming environment to escape extreme outdoor conditions
- Internet resources supporting entrepreneurship/job search, students during afterschool hours, formal on-line education, telehealth, access to government and community information, and life-long learning



Public Libraries in Arizona

- 233 distinct public library outlets
- Approx. 117 “rural and small” libraries
- Rural advantages and challenges



Public Libraries as Resilience Hubs

“Public libraries are considered trusted pillars in their community, positioning them to provide critical information in the face of extreme challenges.” – Beth Patin



“The public library is a democratic equalizer, open to all and providing access to information that helps people improve their individual, family, and community lives...they function as robust community centers, often providing services that people cannot get elsewhere.”
– Rachel Scott

Public Libraries as Community Champions

- ADHS/CDC COVID-19 Health Disparities Grant (June 2021 – May 2024)
- “Engage, mobilize, and empower community leaders on health promotion and prevention...to support community resilience.”
- Advocating for resources that serve **all** populations in the community
- Focus on rural communities in Arizona

Partnership with AZ Library Association

- Survey library staff to identify training needs
- Dearth of grant opportunities for “rural and small” libraries
- Co-development and co-administration of mini-grant initiative
- Invaluable guidance
- Explore funding sources for program sustainability

Designing a Community Champions Program

- 'Request for proposal' (RFP) development
 - Award amount and distribution
 - Timeline
 - Applicant eligibility
 - Feasibility of initiatives and priority areas
 - Ease of application process
 - Technical assistance for application submission
- Webinar training series component
- Virtual 'community of practice'
- COVID-19 After Action Review (AAR)

Mini-Grant Cohort [Dec 2022 to May 2023]

- 14 mini-grants to “rural and small” libraries (16 distinct libraries)
- Award amount: \$5,000
- 8 of 15 Arizona counties represented
- Priority areas:
 - 1) Promoting Health & Well-being
 - 2) Improving Access to Healthcare & Related Services
 - 3) Addressing Social Protective/Risk Factors (SDOH)

Mini-Grantees

Library Grantee

% Rural 2010

Site Type

56.4 - 74.1



Static (16)

41.2 - 56.3



27.0 - 41.1

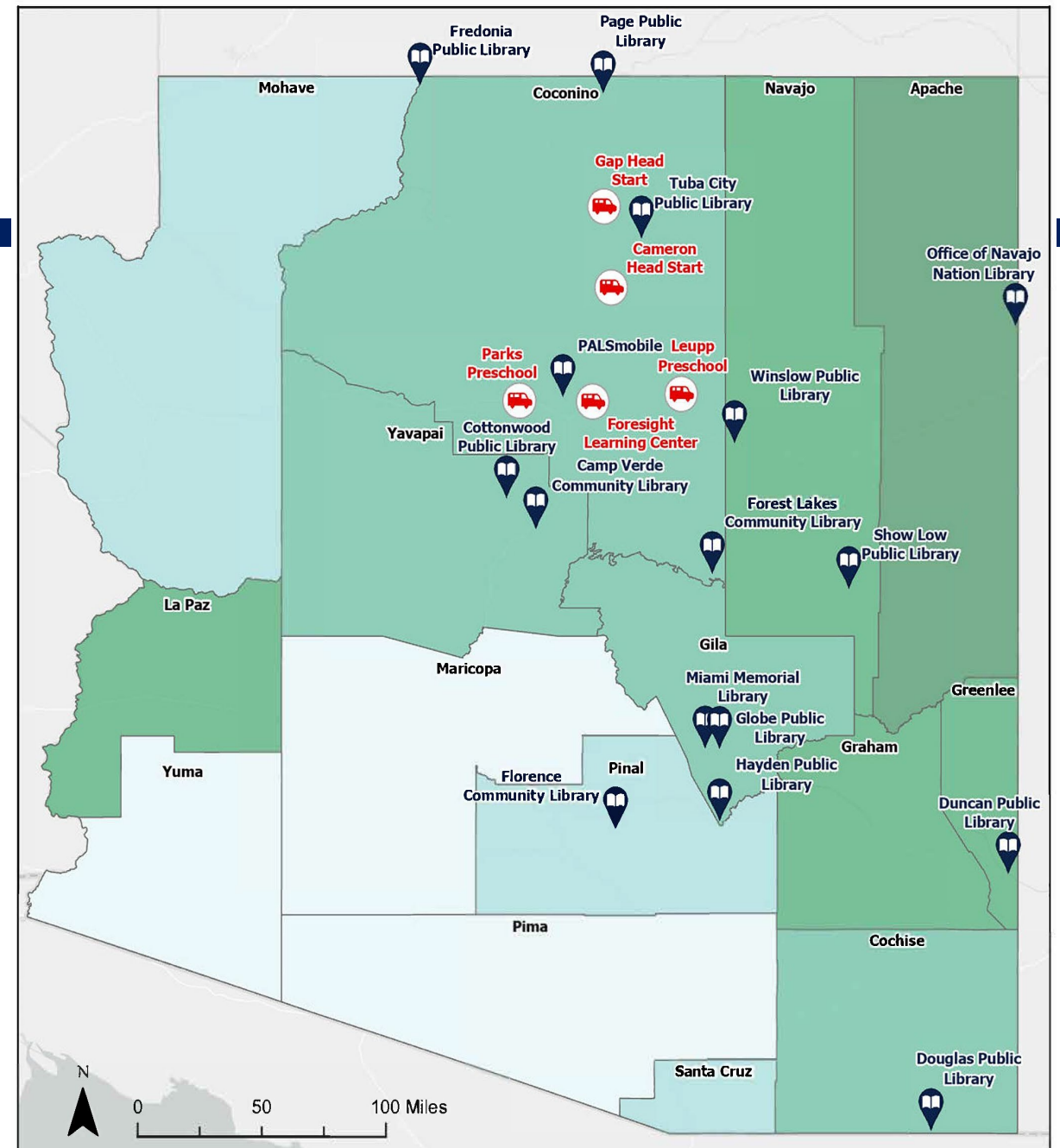


Mobile (5)

10.5 - 26.9



2.4 - 10.4



Sample of Mini-Grantee Programs Addressing Inequities / Health Disparities Exacerbated by COVID-19

1) Promoting Health & Well-being

- Tai Chi and Zumba classes for seniors
- Youth yoga classes
- Life skills program for youth
- CPR & First Aid classes

3) Addressing Social Protective/Risk Factors (SDOH)

- Provision of personal hygiene products
- Partnership with food pantry to teach recipes utilizing food “commodities”
- Vegetable gardening classes



Topical – Addressing Inequities from Censorship

- Removing library materials related to LGBTQ+ populations
- Removing library materials related to certain ethnic groups
- Removing library materials related to gender or sexual identity
- Adapting collection development policies to current political views

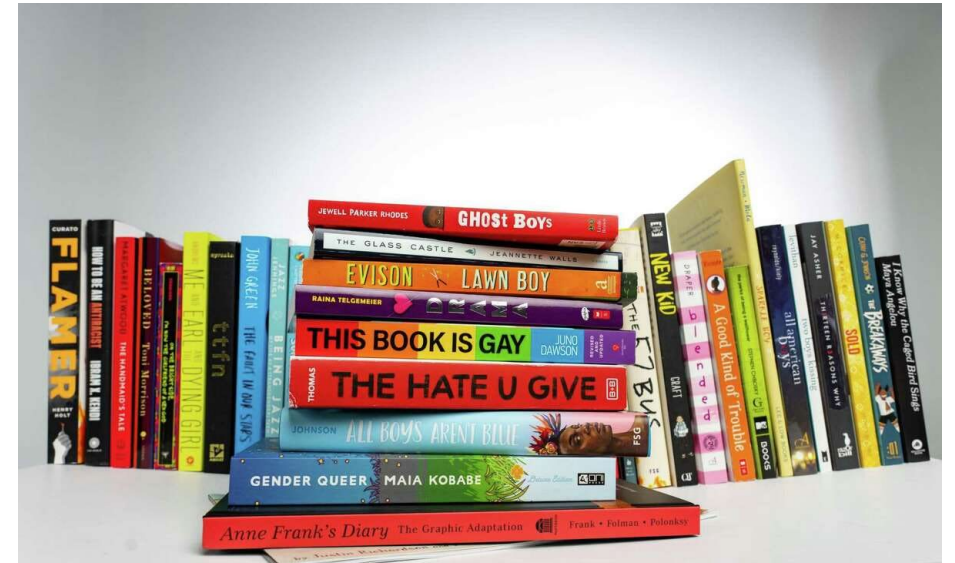


Photo Credit: Mark Mulligan/Houston Chronical

AAR Preliminary Findings – Grantee Focus Group

Challenges

Library Champions Program Lessons Learned & Next Steps

- Value of collaboration
- Implementation of mini-grant initiative
 - Extend RFP window to accommodate libraries with multiple approval layers
 - Consider fiscal agent work-arounds for libraries with complex, lengthy approval processes (tribal)
 - Extend project timeline to increase feasibility of work plan completion
- Next Steps
 - Evaluating impact of grantee projects
 - Refining program design
 - Launching second grantee cohort
 - Exploring opportunities for sustaining initiative

Thank You!

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Photo: Sunset at Watson Lake in Watson Lake Park, Prescott, AZ

