

Libraries at the Frontlines

Addressing Health Disparities and Serving as Hubs of Resilience

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Session Learning Objectives

- 1) Understand the role of libraries in building community health and well-being.
- 2) Recognize the value of library-public health partnerships in addressing health inequities.
- 3) Learn about rural library partner perspectives on program development and implementation.
- 4) Identify lessons learned and recommendations for cross-sectoral engagement to address future public health emergencies.

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.



ADHS Rural Counties

RSL Responses to the Pandemic

COVID-19 Response Debrief

- Libraries were not at the table; not consulted in developing/implementing pandemic protocols.
- This, even as libraries served on the frontlines in providing information and mitigating its harmful effects – especially so in rural, isolated communities.
- Policy and procedures, when provided, were in a constant state of flux.
- RSL staff had to adapt on the fly frequently without direct guidance.
- Virtual programming not well-received

Pandemic Impact/Response

- Brought to the forefront libraries' role, value, capacity, reach
- Local health departments (LHDs) leveraged libraries' community trust and central location for COVID-19 vaccine registration
- Increased awareness of partnership opportunities with LHDs, CAHs/RHCs, state safety net agency

Public Libraries as Partners

Why work with public libraries?

- Approximately 113 “rural and small” libraries across Arizona
- Community-centered mission
- “Health Equity” a shared priority¹
- Value partnerships and community-centered solutions
- Trust²
- Local community experts



What Comprises a Resilience Hub?



Trusted Location
Identified by community as a trusted place to go for information & resources.



Renewable Energy & Storage
Cost-effective, reliable energy generation that can be sustained during prolonged outages.

Community Collaboration

Hubs can only be effective if the community is actively engaged in co-development and operation.



Meeting Everyday Needs

Hubs go beyond emergency response operations to meet community identified necessities.



Designing a Library Champions Program

Engage “rural and small” libraries (RSLs) across AZ

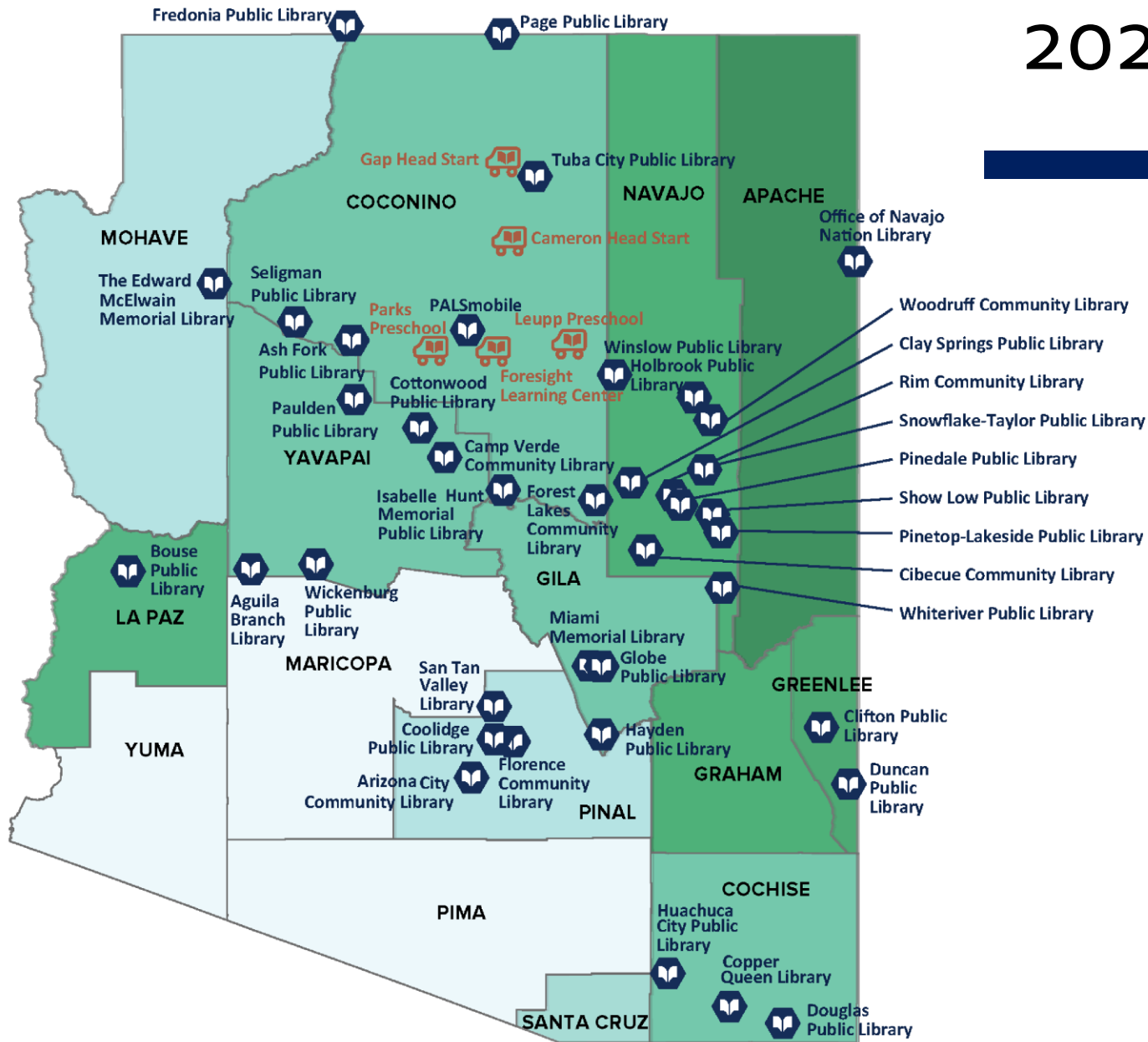
Enhance community resilience

- Request for Proposals (RFP)
 - Project Timeline: 6 – 8 months
 - Funding: \$4,000-5,000
 - Broad priority areas
 - Arizona Library Association as fiscal agent
- Community of Practice (COP)
- Webinar Training Series
- Online Learning Management System

Key Elements for Success

- Streamlined application
- RFP Q&A Sessions
- Simple budget template
- Evaluation focus: stories vs. metrics
- Progress updates via COP
- Online event documentation tool
- Brief online final reporting process

2022-2024 RSL Grantees



37 mini-grant awards

11 of 15 AZ counties



Library Grantee



Mobile Library Grantee

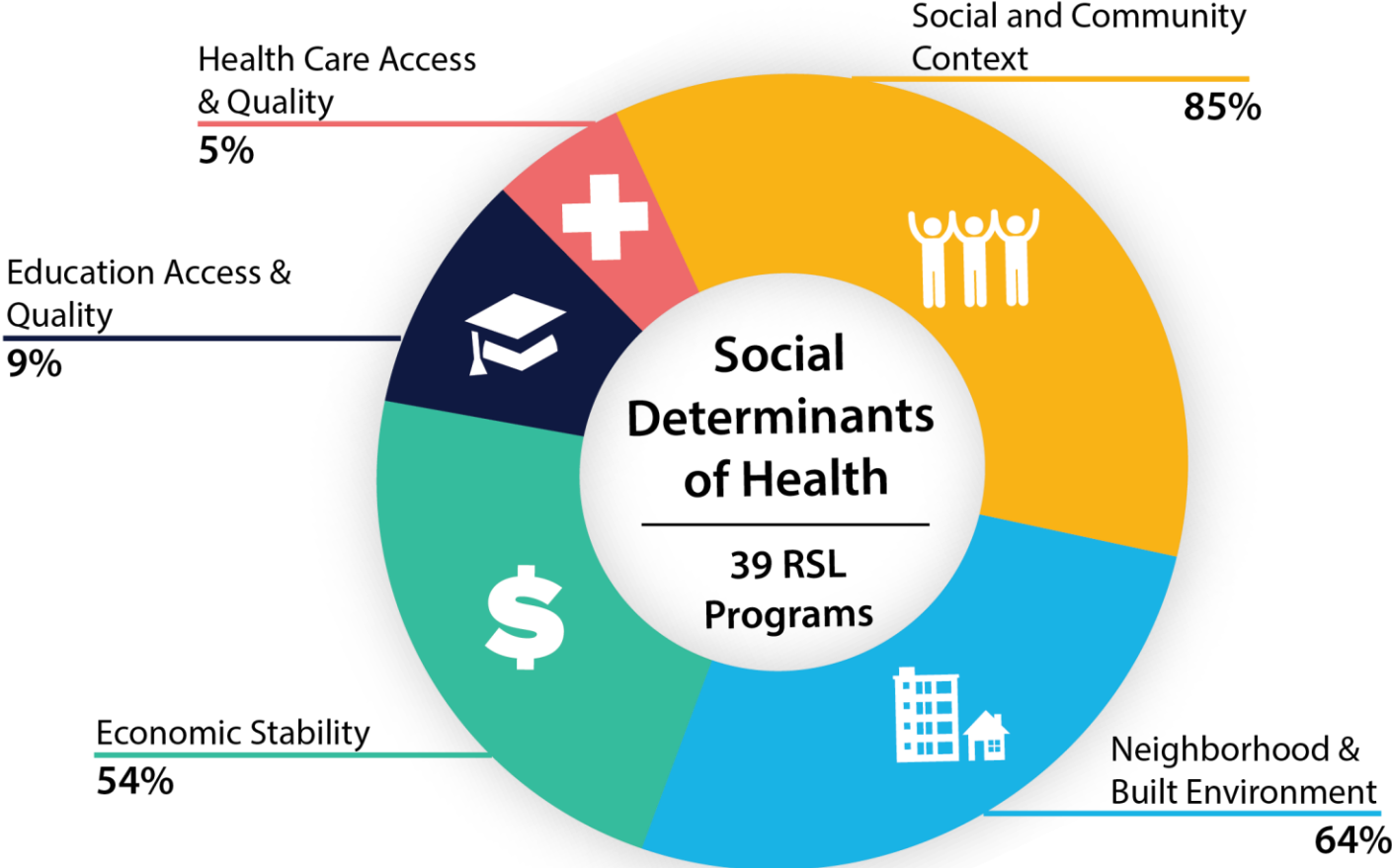
COUNTY % Rural 2020



RSL Grantees – Perspectives on Program Development and Implementation

- Created opportunities to develop new and reinforce existing partnerships.
- Secured leadership commitment to sustain programs beyond grant funding.
- Increased foot traffic that had been declining (pre-pandemic and during).
- Impacted community members in need through provision of critical resources.
- Redressed social isolation for many in the community; promoted development of new friendships and support systems.
- Heightened awareness of prevalence of local food insecurity.
- Highlighted the critical need for youth life skills training.
- Strengthened resilience of community through wellness programming.

RSL Grantees Addressing SDOH (Healthy People 2030)



Tips to Successful Library-Public Health Partnerships

- Develop relationship and build trust.
- Connect with your State Library Association and State Library Agency.
- Recognize limited capacity (staff and resources) to **lead** projects.
- Focus on simple, easy, scalable implementation.
- Don't ask for the world in a box.
- Understand that libraries are knowledgeable about community level concerns and needs.
- Align priorities.

Thank You!

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Supplemental Handout:
https://bit.ly/libraries_frontline
or access QR code →



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

