APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2017.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico

Program Title: Children's and Teen Neighborhood Collections

Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: John A. Vithoulkas

Title: County Manager

Signature:

1. **Program Overview**

Neighborhood Collections are a new way of organizing materials that is more responsive to the way children and families look for books. The service began in Henrico County Public Libraries (HCPL) in 2012, when a Children's librarian at the Gayton Branch devised a way to answer the question, "Where are all the Truck books?" Neighborhoods include both fiction and non-fiction titles for preschool to early elementary children. Teen Neighborhoods were later created and grouped not by subject, but by intangible appeal factors like emotion and mood. In 2016, children's Neighborhoods were expanded to every branch of HCPL, and statistics and survey results show that they are popular and helpful for children, parents, and caregivers.

Usage statistics show that Neighborhood Collections not only increase circulation of a collection but also increase checkouts of historically low-circulating items. Librarians found that in many of the Neighborhoods, staff had a hard time keeping items on the shelves. The demand was so high that up to 80% of collections were checked out regularly. Even lower-demand Neighborhoods had a minimum of 45% of the collection checked out on average.

To implement this project, librarians created book lists including high quality, fiction and nonfiction titles related to an area of interest. Software was utilized to track item locations and circulation statistics. The library allocated space to neighborhoods and created signage and labels using an icon-based, uniform visual labeling system that allowed the neighborhoods program to be easily replicated across all of the library's branches.

Neighborhoods help parents, children, and teens browse to find interesting books, and help staff be assured that recommended titles would be successful choices for their readers in subjects outside their area of expertise. In addition, Neighborhoods allow repurposing of materials that are high quality but have fallen out of favor. The patron response has been overwhelmingly positive, indicating that the program has met and even exceeded its goals.

2. **Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality**

Public libraries traditionally organize books by the author's last name and the Dewey decimal system. Neighborhood Collections are a new way of organizing materials by subject that is more responsive to the way that children and teens look for books. In 2012, after years of daily requests for "books about trucks," Children's librarian, Erin Lovelace, started looking for a better way to help children and their grown-ups find the books they wanted.

HCPL's Neighborhood Collections were designed to make collections easier for patrons to use, to help young people and their families discover new books on topics of interest, to display materials in an attractive and inviting way, and to increase the circulation of materials. Neighborhood Collections began as a pilot program in the children's department of the library system's Gayton Branch. The program started as an answer to a frequent question: "Where are all the truck books?" The answer, prior to this new organizational system, had included using the catalog, waiting for the assistance of library staff, and looking anywhere from two to ten (or more) locations in the library. The program is intended to empower the library's youngest patrons to find books in which they are interested.

In 2016, Young Adult literature selector, Alicia Ahlvers, noted that teens searching for books often asked for help finding books "like the ones John Green writes." When queried further, teen library users indicated that they were looking for titles that evoked a specific emotional response. After examining data regarding how teens select and read fiction and narrative non-fiction, Erin's Neighborhood project looked like it might be a good solution for this problem. With a new library under construction, the timing was perfect to try out this new approach, and Alicia adapted the Neighborhood concept for use with teen populations. While the concept of Neighborhood Collections was not a new one, using intangible appeal factors like emotional response as a way to group books had never been done in this way before.

3. **How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria**

The HCPL Neighborhoods Project originated with an idea from a single Children's librarian at a small neighborhood branch library and grew to transform our Children's library services throughout the county. Through an innovative and interdepartmental effort drawing from staff expertise, high-tech data gathering and analysis software, modern graphic design, and repurposing existing library materials, HCPL succeeded in meeting a community need in a timely, low-cost manner. The Children's Neighborhoods eliminated the separation of fiction and nonfiction and allowed users to bypass searching by Dewey Decimal call number or alphabetical order of author's last name in favor of browsing by area of interest.

The Teen Neighborhoods program utilized the same methodology, adding nuance through an understanding of teen readers' desire to emotionally connect with literature. This required additional polling and data gathering across platforms ranging from direct interviews of teen readers to social media group polling. In addition, this is a completely original approach to teen library service; the concept of grouping teen books by emotion and mood has originated in Henrico County.

Libraries across the state can create neighborhoods to facilitate patron browsing at minimal cost, using existing library circulation software and creating signage to fit any budget.

4. **How Program Was Carried Out**

The first three Neighborhoods created were Dinosaurs, Transportation, and Farm. Staff quickly found that the demand was quite high and regularly added new themes over a two-year period. For each Neighborhood that was created, librarians drafted a list of subject headings that should be included, and added both fiction and non-fiction titles. The Transportation Neighborhood, for example, includes the following subjects: vehicles, boats, trucks, airplanes, trains, buses,

bicycles, transportation, subways, tractor trailers, automobiles, motorcycles, construction equipment, and helicopters.

By 2014, there were 17 Neighborhoods at the Gayton Branch, and usage proved that this program was successful, sustainable, and invaluable to library patrons. The original Neighborhoods were ABC & 123, Bedtime, Brothers and Sisters, Bugs, Careers, Dinosaurs, Dress Up, Farm, Folktales, Forest, Jungle, Me, Monsters, Pets, Space, Toddler, and Transportation.

At this point, the Gayton library began sharing data on Neighborhood usage, and the Youth Services department prepared to launch this program at other locations in the library system. Given the difference in size of library buildings and the variations in shelving types across HCPL branches, it was clear that not all branches could accommodate the same number of Neighborhoods. As Neighborhoods were established across the library system, the program was to be implemented with an initial set of "core" Neighborhoods that had proven to be the most popular during the pilot phase: ABC & 123, Dinosaurs, Dress Up, and Transportation. There were plenty of books in the system to maintain the high interest and demand and plenty of newly published items to supplement as needed. Librarians utilized the subject headings to search our current holdings across the system and identified which books could be moved into Neighborhoods.

The system-wide program rollout required continuity of design, so that patrons could readily identify the various Neighborhoods regardless of which library branch they used on a given day. In addition, it was important for staff to be able to visually identify Neighborhood books quickly. To address these concerns, the library's Public Relations Department developed signage to place in book bins and labels to be used on book spines for each Neighborhood. The colorful signage included an icon symbolizing the Neighborhood's subject, the name of the Neighborhood and, in

some cases, a reference to the Dewey Decimal System number range directing patrons to additional books on the subject. A corresponding spine label with just the graphic icon was placed on the lowest portion of each book spine, below the book's call number. Books in the Neighborhoods retained their original call number, but their "home location" in the catalog was changed to the Neighborhood in which they belonged.

Through the end of 2015-2016, Neighborhoods spread through the whole HCPL System. To date, all libraries within the HCPL system have at minimum the four "core" Neighborhoods mentioned above; most have expanded well beyond the core Neighborhoods; and all continue to expand as they reallocate space within their collections to meet the growing patron interest. As branches choose to expand their Neighborhood Collections, they utilize books that already belong to their collections to populate the Neighborhoods. Librarians work with administrators to run reports that determine which titles are in Neighborhoods at other branches in order to create new Neighborhoods. The collection management software and interdepartmental cooperation are foundational to the ease with which Neighborhoods can be replicated across the library system.

The Neighborhoods were so well-received that HCPL administrators chose to launch each of the library system's new library buildings – Libbie Mill and Varina Libraries, which opened in 2015 and 2016, respectively – with a minimum of twelve Neighborhoods in their Children's collections. While the Children's Neighborhoods were being expanded, the Teen Neighborhoods were being considered but with space in most Teen rooms at a premium, the concept was set aside. When additional space became available in the Teen area in the Varina Area Library, which was set to open in June of 2016, it seemed like a perfect time to add the Teen Neighborhoods as a pilot project.

After input from the Teen Services librarians and teen library users, it was determined the most requested way patrons wished to find a book revolved around how a book made the reader feel. After much discussion with readers, it was discovered that when a teen asked for a book "like John Green's", they were seeking a book that made them cry, and when they asked for more books "like Don Calame", they wanted to laugh out loud.

The next step was to identify which emotions were routinely described when people talked about books and how that impacted their book choices. Were they in the mood to laugh, cry, or possibly, be terrified? It turned out the majority of people polled in person and on social media said it was "very important" to know what emotions a book would elicit when selecting a book to check out. A variety of tools were used to narrow down the list for the six Neighborhoods, including surveying local Teen service librarians and teens, asking on professional distribution lists, and polling Facebook groups of librarians, teens, and adult readers of teen materials. In the end, the Neighborhoods selected included books that made you Ugly Cry (CRY), Feel the Fear (FEAR), Get Inspired (DOIT), Find Your Bliss (LOVE), Laugh Out Loud (LOL), and Get Away (AWAY) from it all. Because processing and labeling of the materials mirrored the Children's Neighborhood Collections, staff were free to get creative with the signage and descriptors. For example, the headline for one sign was "In the mood to…Ugly Cry: Books that rip your heart out of your chest and stomp it until you are a sobbing heap on the ground."

In the six months the Neighborhoods have been available to the public at the Varina branch, they have been so well received, space has been found in a second area library to add the three most popular Neighborhoods: Ugly Cry, LOL, and Fear. The Neighborhoods at the Twin Hickory Area Library have been popular since being launched in December 2016.

5. **Financing and Staffing**

For the Gayton children's pilot project the cost was extremely low. Spine labels and signs already available at the branch were repurposed. Once Neighborhoods began being used at multiple branches, our graphic designer created new signage and spine labels and sign holders had to be purchased for each location.

Image Licenses

Because iStockphoto.com licenses their images using credits and we purchased them over time at various fluctuating prices, costs are approximate.

- Sixteen images were licensed for the Children's Neighborhoods, while Teen Neighborhoods used free sources.

- 2 credits per image equaling $7 per credit

  $210 total for image licensing for Children

Insert Printing, in-house

These are inserts to fit the sign hardware used at Libbie Mill at Varina. Printing cost varies based on material and ink coverage but approximately $3 apiece was spent, whether on polypropylene sheet or mounted on foamcore like in the Varina Teen area.

Bin Board hardware

The boards used at Gayton and Tuckahoe were about $60 each, whether with magnetic headers ($62) or designed to receive printed inserts ($60). This cost may be open to interpretation depending on whether it could be considered an expense directly related to the Neighborhoods project, or if the materials would have been ordered anyway for other uses. The project began with three neighborhoods, costing approximately $180, and expanded to 17, costing $1,020. Because of the short implementation timeline of three months and the availability of a talented

graphic designer, signage and stickers were created in-house, and books in the collection were repurposed. The Varina Teen Neighborhood was an extremely economical project with a price tag of under $50.00.

Total Cost of all Children's and Teen Neighborhoods

Image licensing: $210

Bin Board Hardware for 17 Neighborhoods at Gayton Library: $1,020

Bin Board Hardware for 13 Neighborhoods at each of 2 new libraries: $1,560

Estimated cost of Bin Boards for remaining libraries: $1,800 (5 boards/library, across 6 libraries)

Teen Neighborhoods: $50

    Total: $4,590

- The initial program cost for three neighborhoods was $60 x 3 neighborhoods + $42 = $222.

- Over the life of the Gayton Library project the cost was $60 x 17 neighborhoods + $210 = $1,230.

- For Libbie Mill and Varina Children's Neighborhoods, the art was already purchased and the signage would have had to be done so it added no cost to the new libraries.

6. **Program Results**

Gayton Library created six new Neighborhoods in October 2014, and tracked the circulation data using Directors Station software. Eighty-three percent of new Neighborhood items circulated at least once in the first month, and 40% circulated at least twice in the first month. Nine percent of items hadn't circulated in six months prior to being included in a Neighborhood. Of the items that hadn't circulated in six months prior to being added to a Neighborhood, 84% circulated at least once within a month, 47% circulated twice, and 7% circulated three times. These statistics prove

that Neighborhood Collections can help to move items that historically have low circulation as well as generally increase circulation of a collection's materials.

Children's librarians conducted a brief survey to gain more information about how patrons felt about Neighborhoods at the Gayton Library. Staff distributed 200 survey copies to patrons and received 47 completed surveys. When asked how frequently they used Neighborhoods, 33 caregivers said they used them on every visit, and ten said they used them during most visits. When asked how they felt about Neighborhoods, 24 caregivers indicated that they "couldn't live without them; they make my life easier." Twenty-two caregivers indicated that they "enjoyed them".

The survey also asked patrons for any other comments they would like to share. Here are some of the highlights:

"I love the displays! Makes trips to the library very easy! I recognize it's more work, but it is really helpful!"

"I love that you have your books organized in themes. Makes it easy to select books with two little ones."

"I wish every library had these displays."

One of the biggest indicators of success was empty shelves. Librarians found that in many of the Neighborhoods, specifically those later identified as "core", staff had a hard time keeping items on the shelves. The demand was so high that up to 80% of collections were checked out regularly. Even lower demand Neighborhoods had a minimum of 45% of the collection checked out on average.

Because the opening day collection of the Varina Teen Neighborhoods consisted of all-new materials, Librarians could not compare past usage. However, according to Directors Station and CollectionHQ data, 926 items circulated during the first six-month period. Compared with

circulation data for the entire Teen collection at Varina library, it was determined that one-third of all Teen fiction circulation for the past six months was generated by the Teen Neighborhood Collections.
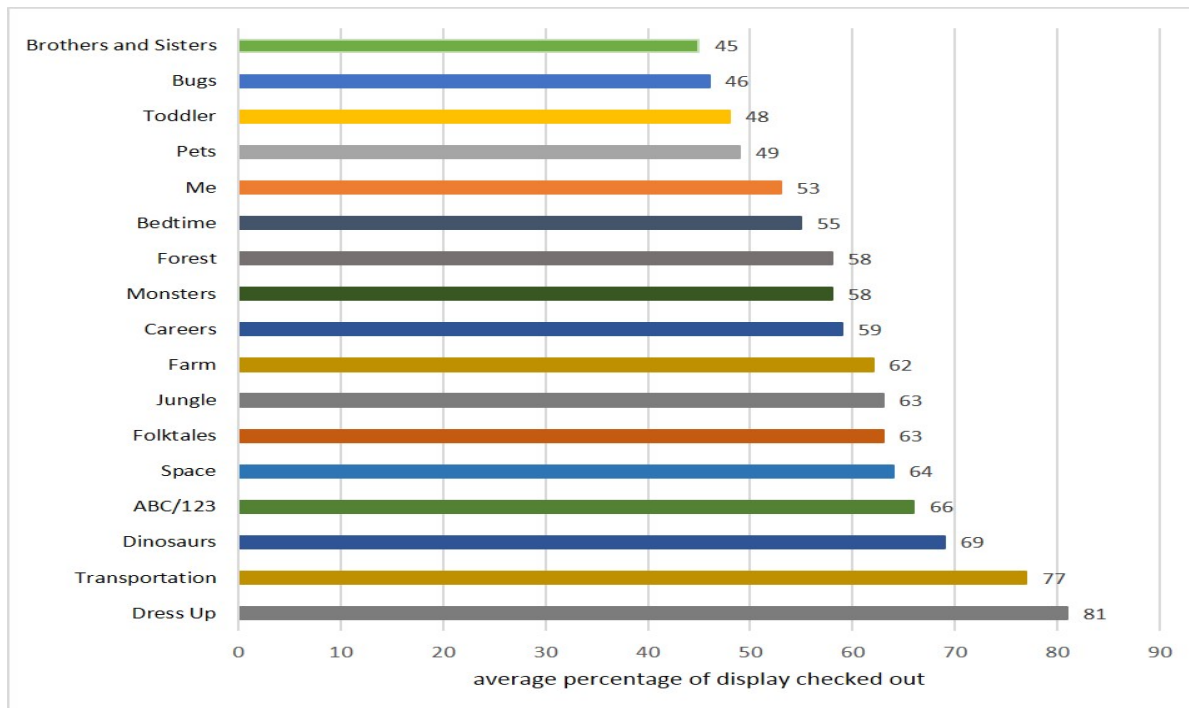
The Neighborhoods program increases the usefulness and accessibility of Children's and Teen Collections to library patrons. This new service provides a needed update to traditional library methods of grouping materials. The titles selected for these collections were all vetted by the Children's and Teen selectors for their high quality and interest to teens. Staff could be assured that titles recommended would be successful choices for their readers, without needing to be an expert in reader's advisory for a particular collection. In addition, it was an opportunity to repurpose materials that were high quality but had fallen out of favor. The patron response has been overwhelmingly positive, indicating that the program has met and exceeded its goals.

7. **Brief Summary**

Neighborhood Collections are a new way of organizing materials that is more responsive to the way that children and teens look for books. The program began in Henrico County Public Libraries (HCPL) in 2012, when Erin Lovelace, a Children's librarian in the county, noticed a need for children's books to be organized by subject to improve ease of access. The first Neighborhoods were created for children, and the subjects were Dinosaurs, Transportation, and Farms. Each of these Neighborhoods included both fiction and non-fiction titles for preschool to early elementary children. The program was then expanded to encompass teen literature, and teen books were grouped into Neighborhoods based on emotion and mood. After assessing the program, both the Children's and Teen Neighborhood Collections added to the customer experience and improved circulation of materials.

Stickers used on Children's books for the various Neighborhood Collections.
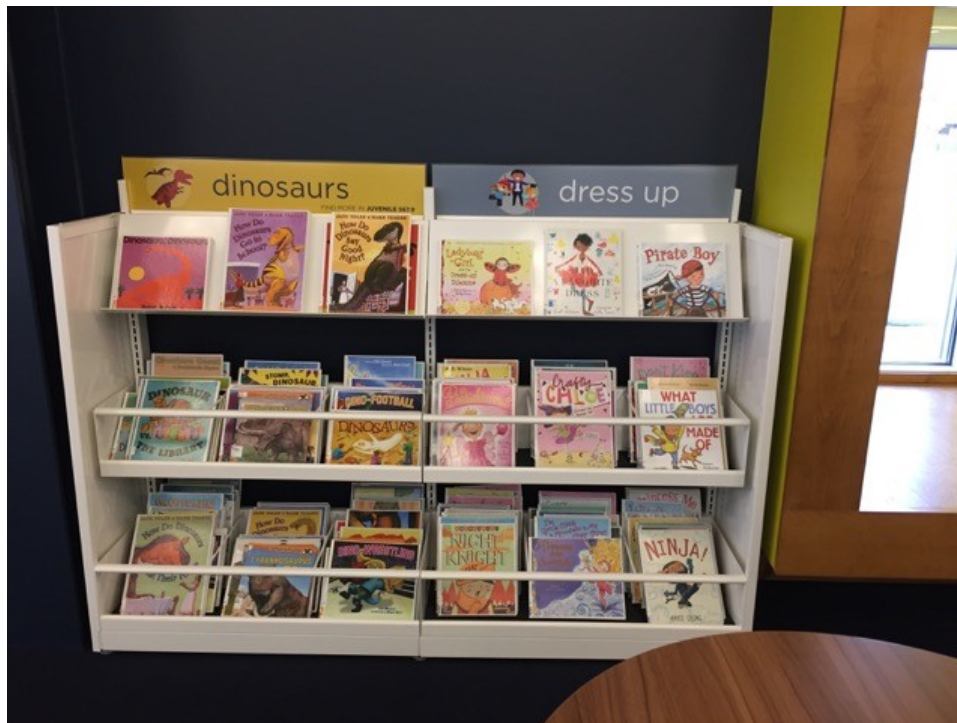

Gayton Neighborhoods

Children's Neighborhoods

Children's Neighborhoods

Children's Neighborhoods

Children's Neighborhoods

Teen Neighborhoods

The two most popular Teen Neighborhood Collections.

YA Neighborhoods

shelf headers

spine labels

IN THE MOOD TO ... find your bliss — **LOVE** Books about finding a thing or person that brings you happiness.

LOVE

IN THE MOOD TO ... get away **AWAY** Books that take you away to other times and places.

AWAY

IN THE MOOD TO ... GET inspired **DO IT** Books that make you want to get up and change the world!

DO IT

IN THE MOOD TO ... laugh OUT loud **HAHA** Books that make you LOL in awkward public places. Or make you shoot Dr. Pepper out of your nose.

HAHA

IN THE MOOD FOR ... THE fear factor **FEAR** Books that make you turn on all the lights in the house. Or not go to the beach. Or maybe never leave your bedroom again.

FEAR

IN THE MOOD TO ... ugly cry **CRY** Books that rip your heart out of your chest and stomp on it until you're a sobbing heap on the ground.

CRY

Teen Neighborhood Signs