

Friends of the Merced County Library

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f: Friends of the Merced County Public Library



February 28, 2022

Dear Ad Hoc Merced City Council Committee:

Please accept this proposal from the Friends of the Merced County Library (FOMCL), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization since 1974, for City of Merced Community Funding. The requested contact information appears above, and the Committee may also reach the Friends' President and primary contact, Susan Flinspach, at her home phone 209-233-9504.

The FOMCL has been a charity for over 50 years, and its mission is to enhance, focus public attention on, and generate community support for services, facilities, and needs of the Merced County Library. Relevant to this proposal is the organization's current long-term goal, the construction and equipping of a new Teen Center, named for library advocate Mary Hofmann, in the Merced Library, located at 2100 O Street, Merced. To date, the objectives accomplished to meet this goal include: 1) advocacy resulting in a \$100,000 commitment by the Merced County Board of Supervisors to begin construction of the Teen Center in FY 2022-23; and 2) fundraising \$35,000 of the resources needed to furnish and equip the new center.

The FOMCL is requesting \$25,000 for new books and bookcases for the Teen Center from the City of Merced Community Funding. The books and shelving will be purchased, housed in an alternate teen area in the Merced Library, and put into circulation during the FY 2022-23 center construction. The requested bookcases will be on casters so they will roll into place with their contents intact. When the construction is completed, the books and bookcases will be moved to their final home in the new Teen Center on the top floor of the Merced Library.

The FOMCL's request fits the City of Merced Community Funding RFP well because it squarely addresses a city priority. In December, Mayor Serrato acknowledged that supporting youth programs is one priority of the city of Merced's ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) plan (<https://www.cityofmerced.org/Home/Components/News/News/1400/17>). The new Teen Center will be a site where the Merced County Library staff, joined by high-school students who have already volunteered to serve on a Teen Center Planning Advisory Committee, and community members will develop many youth programs, such as poetry slams, book clubs, dramatic performances, Teen Reads, and supervised opportunities for individuals and groups to create literature, art, music, videos, and science and technology projects. Underlying each of these programs is the right selection of new books to inspire and guide young minds. A curated collection of young-adult fiction and nonfiction, books not currently found in the Merced Library, is essential for the development of Teen Center programs for Merced youth.

Libraries. . .touch the future!

The FOMCL's request also complies with ARPA funding guidelines in that the new Teen Center, its holdings, and its programs help level the socioeconomic inequalities across teen households that were exacerbated by the pandemic. Learning from home for a year, some students had plenty of resources, good computers and printers, excellent wireless, and opportunities for serious study and for collaboration. Others did not. The new Teen Center will give every Merced youth access to the best resources and services at the best price—free. Teens will be able to use books, reference databases, and other informational sources to pursue their interests and goals. They will be able to depend on the Merced Library's excellent wireless and on the new computers and printers designated just for them. And should the City of Merced Committee agree with the FOMCL, they will have access to a large selection of the books they actually want to read without having to buy them. In short, all Merced teens will be able to use what was available, especially during the pandemic, to more affluent households only.

The FOMCL supports the Merced County Library (Library) through advocacy and funding for specific purposes. The Library, in turn, is accountable to the FOMCL for how it spends FOMCL contributions. That long-standing relationship would govern a City of Merced Community Funding award to the FOMCL for the Teen Center.

The FOMCL is proud of its 50-year track record of support for the Library. Some highlights of that partnership from the past five years appear below. Full contact information for County Librarian Amy Taylor (ataylor@co.merced.ca.us or 209-385-7485), our Library partner, appears in the references section.

1. The FOMCL's first long-term goal, a new bookmobile, will hit the road later this calendar year.
 - a. The FOMCL adopted a bigger and better bookmobile as the nonprofit's first long-term goal in September 2017.
 - b. The FOMCL raised funds from September 2017 through December 2021.
 - c. The FOMCL co-sponsored a California State Library grant for the bookmobile in early 2020 and provided matching funds of \$25,000.
 - d. The FOMCL provided \$5,000 more for the purchase and for the enrichment of the new bookmobile with equipment, books, and materials.
2. The FOMCL worked with the Library and Merced City School District officials to get 556 third graders a new Library card in September 2021.
 - a. The impetus for this initiative was a FOMCL annual goal set in May 2021. The FOMCL sat at the table throughout the summer negotiations.
 - b. FOMCL volunteers picked up completed Library applications at the schools and returned the new Library cards to the schools.
 - c. The FOMCL gave teachers whose students turned in completed Library applications an Amazon gift card.
 - d. The FOMCL now plans for this to be an annual Library-card drive.
3. The FOMCL provides annual funding to supplement Summer Reading (held at all Library branches).
 - a. The FOMCL provided \$10,000 each year, including 2022, for Summer Reading performers, prizes, and other needs.
 - b. The FOMCL is currently administering a \$3,000 grant from The Save Mart Companies CARES Foundation for Summer Reading performers in 2022.

4. The FOMCL provides annual funding (\$2,000-\$3,500) to supplement other programs for children and youth held at every Library branch.
5. The FOMCL organized and co-sponsored literary events.
 - a. Co-sponsored by the United Way of Merced County, the Library, and many other community partners, READ WOKE Merced County (January – May 2021) was organized by the FOMCL. READ WOKE was a guided and collaborative opportunity to read and think about the breadth of humanity. Its purpose was to build greater understanding of, and respect for, every Merced County resident.
 - b. Co-sponsored by the United Way of Merced County and the Library, Merced County Reads (March-April 2021) was organized, produced, and posted by the FOMCL. Merced County Reads was a photo exhibition of Merced County residents holding their favorite book.
 - c. Organized by the University of California Merced, an author visit by Robert Dawson held in the Merced Library on February 25, 2020 was co-sponsored by the Library and the FOMCL.
 - d. Co-sponsored by the Library and the UC Merced School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts, a virtual visit by author Anthony Ray Hinton on May 4, 2021 was organized and funded by the FOMCL.
6. The FOMCL provided incidental funding for additional Library needs.
 - a. \$2,910 for lock-boxes on the main doors at most Library branches in FY 2018-19.
 - b. Hundreds of dollars for gift cards to be used as prizes and incentives in 2018, 2019, and 2020.
 - c. \$4000 donation in fall 2021 for a subscription to the virtual children's library, *TumbleBooks*.
7. The FOMCL provides funding for new books totaling hundreds or thousands of dollars each year.

The FOMCL, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization since 1974, is requesting a \$25,000 award for books and bookcases for the new Teen Center to be built in the Merced Library. The items will be purchased and put into circulation in FY 2022-23 to provide the implementation and use records that the award demands. The books will be fundamental to the development of quality youth programs, a city priority, in the new Teen Center. Open access to the books, quality youth programs, and other Teen-Center resources will help counter socioeconomic disparities across teen households in Merced, giving less-advantaged youth access to what they need to succeed. The FOMCL and the Library have a 50-year history of excellent financial relations, ensuring the prompt and transparent use of the funding award as proposed here.

Thank you for your careful review of the FOMCL proposal. Do not hesitate to contact Susan Flinspach (friendsofmercedcountylibrary@gmail.com, 209-233-9504) with questions.



Susan Leigh Flinspach, President
Friends of the Merced County Library

INDIVIDUAL STAFF EXPERIENCE

The Friends of the Merced County Library is an all-volunteer organization. That is a good thing: no staff means that 100 percent of the requested award, \$25,000, will go directly to the proposed purpose—books and bookcases for the new Teen Center. The current FOMCL President, Susan Flinspach, working with Vice President Donald Barclay, will be responsible for overseeing the Community Funding award.

Susan Flinspach

Susan has a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Iowa and a Ph.D. in education from the University of Chicago. She was a faculty member at Columbia College in Chicago, the University of Iowa in Iowa City, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill before moving to California. At the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC), she taught in the Education and Psychology Departments and became a researcher on two major vocabulary studies funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Education. She retired from UCSC as an Associate Researcher in 2014.

After moving to Merced, Susan became the FOMCL Vice President in FY 2016-17, and she has been the President since mid-2017. During her presidency, the major FOMCL accomplishments include the revitalization of the organization and the adoption/fulfillment of long-term savings goals—the first for a new bookmobile and the second for the Mary Hofmann Teen Center.

Donald Barclay

Donald earned his bachelor's degree from Boise State University and his masters' degrees in both English and Library and Information Science from the University of California, Berkeley. Donald has worked as an academic librarian since 1990, holding positions at New Mexico State University, the University of Houston, and the Texas Medical Center in Houston. In the summer of 2002, he moved to Merced to take a job with the embryonic University of California, Merced. While at UC Merced, he had the privilege of helping to create a true twenty-first-century academic library for the first U.S. research university of the twenty-first century. He currently holds the position of Deputy University Librarian at UC Merced. He has authored numerous articles and books over the course of his career on topics ranging from the literature of the American West to library and information science.

Donald joined the FOMCL in 2019 and became Vice President in 2021. He will assume the mantle of the presidency later this year.

PROPOSED PROJECT & SCOPE OF SERVICES

Detailed scope of services describing all services to be provided

The \$25,000 award will fund a project to purchase new books and bookcases for the future Teen Center in the Merced Library, 2100 O Street, Merced, and to encourage teens to start reading them right away. During FY 2022-23, Library staff will make the purchases and place them into a temporary teen area in the Merced Library. The books will be put into circulation as the Library receives them so young library card holders can check them out before the Teen Center construction is finished. The FOMCL, the Library, and their partners will publicize the availability of the new books in schools and in communities where relatively few have library cards. Once the construction is done, the books and bookcases will be moved to their final home in the new Teen Center. The excellent collection of young-adult fiction and nonfiction funded by this project will draw teens into the Merced Library for books they want to read. It will also lay the foundation for new programs to be developed and delivered in the Teen Center over the decade to come.

What needs will you address? How will you achieve them?

The project addresses two needs: 1) the need for more quality resources and programs to serve Merced youth; and 2) the need to improve the access of underserved teens in Merced to the best resources and programs available.

1. The need for more quality resources and programs to serve Merced youth

The FOMCL agrees with the City Council that developing new youth programs in Merced is a priority. As an age group, teens traditionally receive fewer governmental dollars (https://all4ed.org/press_release/new-alliance-report-uncovers-missing-middle-in-federal-education-funding/; <https://all4ed.org/publication/missing-middle-federal-funding-by-grade-span-fiscal-year-fy-2019/>) and have inadequate resources especially during the after-school hours and summer months (<https://www.ala.org/yalsa/teens-need-libraries>; *America for Afterschool*, 2018, Afterschool Alliance <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/researchParentsFamilies.cfm>). Young people need resources and programs in a place where they want to be, in a place that encourages healthy socialization and productive collaborations, in a place that engages their minds and talents, and in a place that helps them achieve their potential. In about two and a half years, the Mary Hofmann Teen Center in the Merced Library will become one such place—a space and resource for youth, as well as a site for delivering quality youth programming.

The project proposed here is an important step paving the way for the Teen Center and its youth programs. The county is funding the center's construction, the community is funding its furniture and equipment, and with this award, the City of Merced will be funding the bulk of its books. The Young Adult Library Services Association states that, "(t)eens need access to a wealth of print and online resources that meet their needs and interests" (*Teens Need Libraries Issue Brief*, <https://www.ala.org/yalsa/teens-need-libraries>). That is the immediate need this project will address in FY 2022-23, before the Teen Center is completed, and it is the foundation on which the Teen Center and its programming will build in subsequent years.

2. The need to improve the access of underserved teens in Merced to the best resources and programs available

In Merced, the pandemic highlighted inequalities in resources across teen households. Many teenaged students struggled with the transition to online learning, but underserved youth faced additional difficulties—inconsistent or faulty access to wireless and good computers, lack of supplemental resources, and limited opportunities for study and for collaboration. One purpose of ARPA funding is to level out such inequities, opening access to better resources for all. That is also one purpose of the new Teen Center in Merced Library.

Opening up access to better resources requires minimizing barriers—like constraints imposed by distance, time, and money. Merced Library (2100 O Street, Merced), home to the future Teen Center, is centrally located in downtown Merced, accessible by public transportation from most parts of the city. The Library is open on weekdays after school until 6:00 p.m., on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings until 8:00 p.m., on Saturdays, and throughout the summer. The new Teen Center will offer young people age-appropriate books and other print materials, e-databases, computer programs, teen-designated computers and other technological equipment, excellent wireless, and areas reserved for study. And best of all, every service, program, and resource available in the new Teen Center, with the exception of printing, will be free.

Improving access also requires informing and engaging target audiences. High-school teens have already signed up to help design and develop the Teen Center this year, so they will start to spread the word about the new resources through student networks. When the award-funded books appear on the new bookcases, ready to be checked out, the FOMCL and the Library will publicize their availability through community partners, including the Merced City School District, the Merced Union High School District, and the Merced County Office of Education. They will also seek help from the United Way, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and new FOMCL partners about how best to inform and encourage Library visits from teens in underserved communities. In these ways, the project will seek to make the new teen resources instrumental to underserved youth in Merced.

What are the project activities?

At the start of FY 2022-23, the FOMCL will ask the Library staff to order the bookcases first. The FOMCL will write the Merced County Library a check for the full amount of the bookcase order, and it will receive a copy of the invoices. The Community Funding award will pay for the bookcases, and the FOMCL will cover shipping and taxes on the bookcase order. Copies of the FOMCL check and the invoices will be shared with the City of Merced as part of the award documentation. The bookcases will be stored in the temporary teen area of the Merced Library until the Teen Center construction is done.

Once the bookcases have been ordered, the FOMCL will ask the Library staff to purchase new books for the Teen Center with the remainder of the award. The books will be selected by Library staff and ordered from numerous publishing houses. Many publishers give the Library a special discount on the books they order, which means the award will fund many more Library-purchased books than might be expected from perusing the young-adult section at Barnes and Noble.

The FOMCL will write a check for the remainder of the award to the Merced County Library for the new teen books including shipping and taxes. It will receive printouts of all the book orders from the award funds, which it will share with the City Council. The Library staff will notify the FOMCL as boxes of books arrive, and whenever possible, the Library staff and FOMCL will collect invoices. Unfortunately publishers rarely fill one order with one shipment, and they often combine different orders going to the same place (Teen Center books and other books) into one shipment. Especially for such large book orders, with one teen book arriving in this box and another in that box, the collection of invoices for every award-funded book is highly unlikely. The FOMCL will share with the City Council all the award-funded book invoices collected. Towards the end of the fiscal year, it will document the arrival of the remaining award-funded books by matching the book order printouts to catalogue records showing all the award-funded books available in the Library system.

The FOMCL, the Library, and their partners—the Merced City School District, the Merced Union High School District, and the Merced County Office of Education—will publicize the availability of the new books to students and their families. To engage underserved teens, members of the FOMCL will contact their community partners including the United Way and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and they will develop new community connections. The FOMCL will enlist the support of all these organization to inform young people in underserved communities about the new books and to encourage them to visit the Merced Library.

For progress reports, the FOMCL will provide the City Council with invoices, and it will document the milestones passed including: when the bookcases arrive and are housed in the temporary teen area; when the award-funded books begin to arrive; when the first books are catalogued and ready to be checked out; and the circulation records for the new books. At the end of the project, the FOMCL will provide the City Council with a final report that includes the circulation records for award-purchased books as an indicator of the early impact of the award. The FOMCL will also submit the matching of order-to-catalogue records for those award-funded books that do not appear on any of the invoices.

Project timeline

July 1 – October 30

Phase 1: purchase and use of the bookcases

- FOMCL writes a check to pay for the bookcases, shipping, and tax.
- Library staff orders bookcases.
- The bookcases arrive, and the invoices are collected.
- The bookcases are housed in the temporary teen area.

August 1 – October 1

Phase 2: purchase of the books

- FOMCL writes a check for the remaining amount of the award for young-adult fiction and nonfiction.
- Library staff orders the books, generates a printout of every order, and shares the printouts with the FOMCL.

September 1 – January 31

Phase 3: books arrive, are catalogued, and are put into circulation

- Boxes of books begin to arrive. Whenever possible, the Library staff and FOMCL collect invoices.
- Cataloguing of the books begins. The catalogued books are placed on the new bookcases and become available for checkout.
- The Library, the FOMCL, and their partners inform Merced youth about the availability of the new books and encourage visits to Merced Library.
- Library staff begins to track the circulation of award-funded books.

February 1 – June 30

Phase 4: the early impact of the award

- The Library, the FOMCL, and their partners continue to inform the public about the new books.
- The circulation of these books continues to be tracked until the end of the fiscal year.
- The FOMCL gathers information to write a final project report.

July 1 – July 31

- The FOMCL writes and submits a final project report to the City Council.

Description of project deliverables for each phase of the work

Phase 1: purchase and use of the bookcases

- The FOMCL presents the City Council with a copy of the FOMCL check to purchase the bookcases and with a copy of the bookcase invoices.

Phase 2: purchase of the books

- The FOMCL provides the City Council with a copy of the FOMCL check to purchase teen books and with a copy of the book order printouts.

Phase 3: books arrive, are catalogued, and put into circulation

- The FOMCL collects and provides the City Council with copies of the invoices for as many of the award-funded books as possible.
- In February, the FOMCL writes and presents the City Council with a 6-month status report on the project.

Phase 4: the early impact of the award

- In June, the FOMCL provides the City Council with the matching of order-to-catalogue records for books purchased with award funds but not appearing on any invoice.
- In July, the FOMCL writes and submits a one-year project report detailing the use of the funds and their initial impact on Merced teens based on the circulation records of the new books. It will remind the City Council that the larger impact of the award will be in the use of these books in the Teen Center in the coming years—both as reading materials and as the foundation for the many youth programs that will be delivered there.

REFERENCES

The FOMCL is not a client itself, nor does it have clients. The FOMCL regards the Library as its mission and the other community groups that collaborate with the FOMCL on projects as partners. References for some of those appear below.

Amy Taylor
County Librarian
Merced County Library
2100 O Street, Merced 95340
209-385-7485

Some recent projects completed in collaboration with the FOMCL (see introductory letter for more details):

- The new bookmobile (2017-2022)
- Library-card drive in Merced City School District third-grade classes (summer/fall 2021)
- Summer Reading for the past five years
- Additional programs/resources for children and youth for the past 5 years
- Literary events
 - READ WOKE Merced County from January through May 2021
 - Merced County Reads photo exhibition from March through April 2021
 - Author visit (Robert Dawson) on February 25, 2020
 - Virtual author visit (Anthony Ray Hinton) on May 4, 2021
- Additional funding for new books and for incidental needs

Manuel J. Alvarado
Chief Executive Officer
United Way of Merced County
531 West Main Street, Merced 95340
209-383-4242

Projects completed in collaboration with the FOMCL:

- READ WOKE Merced County from January through May 2021
- Merced County Reads photo exhibition from March through April 2021

Ida J. Escola
Recording Secretary
Friends of the Livingston Branch Library
13401 Sunset Drive, Livingston, CA 95334
209-986-1969

Projects completed in collaboration with the FOMCL:

- Livingston 5th-grade book report contest (fall 2020)
- Evening-hours survey (developed and implemented August 2021) and on-going advocacy for evening hours (2020 – present)

PROJECT BUDGET
TEEN CENTER FUNDING

FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
Merced County Construction \$100,000 allocated	
Friends of the Merced County Library and its community partners Furnishings and equipment \$35,000 (actual) - \$45,000 (fundraising goal)	
City of Merced Community Funding Teen books and bookcases \$25,000 (proposed here)	

This proposal requests \$25,000 from the City of Merced Community Funding for books and bookcases to be purchased and put into circulation in a temporary teen area located in Merced Library during FY 2022-23. They will be moved to their final home in the new Teen Center when construction is completed. This collection of young-adult fiction and nonfiction will lay the foundation for Teen Center programs for the next decade.

The Friends of the Merced County Library will pay for the shipping and taxes on the new bookcases. Many publishers give the Library a special discount on the books they order. The price for different kinds of books varies widely. A \$25,000 Community Funding award would fund the bookcases and probably between 700 and 850 new books for the Teen Center.

PROPOSED PROJECT BUDGET FY 2022-23

	Description	Unit cost	# units	Total	Community Funding	FOMCL
Bookcase purchases	Demco Wave Mobile Double-Face Shelving, 42 inches high https://www.demco.com/demco-reg-wave-mobile-double-face-shelving	\$2,079.99	6	\$12,479.94	\$12,479.94	
	Shipping and taxes			\$800.00 (estimate)		\$800.00 (estimate)
Book purchases	A collection of young-adult fiction and nonfiction from various publishing houses, including shipping and taxes	\$16.00 (estimate)	782.5	\$12,520.00 (estimate)	\$12,520.06	
GRAND TOTALS					\$25,000.00	\$800.00 (estimate)