BKLYN Incubator

What is it?
BKLYN Incubator is a process by which public service staff of any title can submit their ideas for new programs at their branches, gain staff and community feedback, and compete for funding to pilot their idea. Funded programs will be assigned a mentor who will offer guidance throughout the implementation of the program. A typical pilot will run for 8-12 weeks, serve a minimum of 15 patrons, and end with a formal evaluation process, after which the program leads will deliver a presentation on the program’s successes in an effort to receive additional funding to launch the program at multiple sites across BPL.

How does it work?
The Incubator will be implemented in six-month cycles beginning with a 13-week competition period open to all full-time public service staff. During those 13 weeks staff will be invited to an orientation workshop aimed at helping staff to design impactful programs, pitch their ideas effectively, and measure outcomes. Submissions will be required to involve a community partner and will go through a series of internal and public review and refinement stages to ensure they are feasible, meet the needs and interests of the community, align with BPL’s organizational goals, and can be adapted in other communities. An open source web-based application will be developed for staff to submit their ideas and for the public to comment and rate proposals. All program ideas will be archived in an “idea bank” for future reference and possible implementation. A minimum of three winners will be selected each cycle to pilot their program over 12 weeks.

What’s required?
If you’re interested in submitting a program idea to be funded, you’ll be required to attend an Incubator orientation workshop where you’ll learn how to:

- Describe your project in narrative form
- Create a budget
- Establish measurable goals that relate to BPL’s Strategic Plan
- Work with community partners to best meet the needs of your neighborhood

What constitutes a “community partner”?
A community partner could be a local day care, small business, homeless shelter, senior center, design firm, artist collective, school, etc. Because the programs should address an audience in your particular neighborhood, ideal partners would be found within the vicinity of the library. If you’re interested in getting help connecting to any agency or potential community partner, feel free to reach out to BPL departments like Adult Learning, Outreach Services, Youth and Family Services, or others.

What’s expected of our community partners?
That’s up to you and the partner. For example, if it’s a partnership with a senior center, the senior center may agree to allocate space over a period of time for the funded program, co-brand fliers, provide refreshments for the participants, guarantee a particular number of participants, or any number of things. The library could provide staff, programming supplies, paid performers, library card drives, program facilitators, or other services. In this scenario both the senior center and the library are contributing to the program that will reach a specific audience.