

Strong Reader Partnership

(formerly Imagination Library of California Strong Reader Partnership)

California State Library Grant Report

July 1, 2024 - August 31, 2025

Program Overview

The Stronger Reader Partnership (SRP) was established to expand access to Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library in California. With support from the California State Library, SRP has worked to build nonprofit infrastructure, strengthen partnerships, and advance enrollment of young children in the statewide program.

This grant to fund this work was issued in July 2024. Due to a legislation change, the grant was placed on hold in late August, 2024 at which point we were asked to update the scope of work and work paused. The pause was lifted and activities resumed as of first quarter 2025.

Key Highlights by Reporting Period

- **July – September 2024**
 - **Meetings and Communications:**
 - 7/1/2024 – Onboarding session with DPIL to go review budget, engagement coordinators, marketing and executive director announcement
 - 7/3/2024 – Second Monthly Check in with State Library
 - 7/12/ 2024 – Onboarding session with DPIL to learn the History of the Program
 - 7/19/2024 – Met with Local Program Partners of DPIL in California
 - 7/29/2024 –Onboarding session with DPIL to review marketing and to discuss recruitment
 - 8/14 - 8/16/2024: Met with Local Program Partners
 - 8/23/2024 – Met with State Library for a monthly check in and to check on status of grant payment
 - 8/26/2024 – Presented ILCA strategic plan to DPIL
 - 9/6/24 – Discussion with State Library to discuss Grant disbursement
 - 9/11/24 – ILCA Board meeting with DPIL to agree to move forward with our partnership
 - 9/27/2024 – Met with DPIL to have conversations around developing effective partnerships
 - **Activities:**
 - Administrative and Infrastructure activities included:

- Opening a nonprofit bank account and establishing financial signatories.
 - Advanced staffing recruitment for regional DPIL Community Engagement Coordinators.
 - Approved contracts with The Shipyard and Axis for temporary outreach and communications support.
 - Met with potential San Diego partners who committed to countywide expansion through 34 organizations.
 - In August, we learned the grant funding was to be radically changed (August 26, 2024). At that time, new plans were proposed to the Board for consideration, while other proactive activities were paused.
 - \$4.8 million was preserved for the Imagination Library California Strong Reader Partnership grant following legislative review.

- **October – December 2024**
 - **Meetings and Communications:**
 - 10/3/25 – Meeting with California State Library to discuss funding
 - 10/11/24 – Meeting with Dollywood Foundation to discuss partnership
 - **Activities:**
 - Work was paused as the board deliberated on how to move forward under the new financial parameters.

- **January – March 2025**
 - **Meetings and Communications**
 - 1/29/25 – ILCA Board Meeting
 - 3/17/25 – ILCA Board Meeting
 - **Activities:**
 - Work continued to be paused as the board deliberated on how to move forward under the new financial parameters.
 - Adopted a new name (Strong Reader Partnership), along with a strategic plan.
 - The board decides to move forward with new funding parameters of \$4,806,663 and provide a proposal option to the California State Library.

- **April – June 2025**
 - **Meetings and Communications**
 - 4/24/25 – Meeting with United Way California Capital Region regarding partnerships
 - 4/24/25 – Meeting with First 5 Fresno to discuss partnerships
 - 4/30/25 – Meeting with DPIL to discuss coordinated outreach engagement
 - 5/9/25 – Met with California State Library to discuss grant modifications
 - 6/4/25 – SRP Board Meeting
 - 6/13/25 – Met with DPIL to discuss coordinated outreach

- 6/24/25 – SRP Board Meeting
 - 6/30/25 – Met with San Diego program partner to discuss partnership opportunities
 - 6/30/25 - Met with United Way California Capital Region to discuss partnership opportunities
 - **Activities:**
 - Launched bilingual website and social media presence (@strongreaderpartnership).
 - As directed by the California State Library, we submitted an updated grant application by June 30, 2025.
 - Provided \$5,000 Community Engagement Grant in Yolo County, with stronger analytics requested by the Board.
- **July – August 2025**
 - **Meetings and Communications**
 - 7/10/25 – Met with DPIL to discuss improvements for integration of SRP and DPIL staff
 - 7/18/25 – Met with First 5 Fresno to discuss partnership opportunities
 - 7/21/25 – Met with DPIL to get to know new North American Regional Manager
 - 7/23/25 – Met with Read to Me Stockton to discuss partnership opportunities
 - 8/6/25 – Met with United Way California Capital Region to discuss support of their August 25 event
 - 8/7/25 – Met with Read to Me Stockton to follow up on partnership opportunities
 - 8/19/25 – Met with DPIL to introduce Community Engagement Coordinators to new staff
 - 8/29/25 – Met with DPIL to talk about San Diego local program partners
 - **Activities:**
 - Continued rollout of bilingual outreach campaign.
 - Standardized market plans drafted for priority counties.
 - Continued coordination with DPIL’s newly appointed North America Director.

Outcomes

- Secured and protected state funding to ensure program sustainability.
- Established nonprofit infrastructure: fiscal systems, staffing plans, marketing platforms, and legal protections.
- Expanded county-level partnerships and piloted community engagement grants.
- Launched increased visibility with bilingual statewide marketing and digital presence.

Financial Overview

The grant period is for two years. In the past year the amount has changed significantly, requiring retooling. However, a significant amount of program foundation has been completed. The next year will see significant outlay of program dollars as partnerships that have been built in the past year come to fruition.

- July, 2024: California State Library issued Grant Award for \$19,226,651
- May, 2025: Learned the grant award revised to \$4,806,663, a new scope of work needed to be created and approved.
- As of August 31, 2025, the amount spent was \$694,567.80
- Additional funding obligations include \$134,938.00 for marketing services,
- Pending and in process obligations include:
 - Partnership with Sacramento Program Partner: \$60,000
- Partnership with Read to Me! Stockton: \$60,000
- Total spent and obligated: \$949,505.80