



Catalyst  
**FAQs**  
Your questions answered



## Who can participate in Catalyst?

Anyone who is currently working in a California library is eligible to apply for the learning cohort.

Those already in leadership positions, front-line library workers, and behind-the-scenes staff are all invited to apply. An MLIS degree is not required. We're looking for people to lead from everywhere, and from any type of library! A Catalyst participant might be a children's librarian or associate who connects well with families; a library assistant who sees ways to improve customer policies; a library adult literacy coordinator who plays an active role in community partnerships and outreach; a school library aide who must act as the library's main advocate; an information technology librarian at a community college who enjoys building relationships among students, faculty, and library staff; or a safety and security coordinator who values community engagement.

We encourage everyone to take a broad and open-minded view of who has leadership potential in their organization, then share this opportunity widely. A strong cohort will include library workers who bring different perspectives, strengths, and lived experiences to their work in libraries.

## What are the benefits of participating in Catalyst?

Benefits to participation in the Catalyst leadership program include:

**Gaining leadership skills**, such as communication, community engagement, facilitation, intercultural development, and co-design.

**Dedicated time** for reflection and application of new skills in a supportive learning community.

**Networking** with California colleagues who represent a diversity of library positions and roles, and developing a relationship with a mentor.

**A deeper understanding** of how to lead in a way that advances equity and creates positive impact at the local, community, and state level.

## **What will the Catalyst learning experience be like?**

Catalyst is designed to accommodate different learning styles and preferences.

Learning will take place both synchronously (during live online meetings) and asynchronously (on participants' own schedules). Activities include Zoom meetings, discussions, readings, live and self-paced courses, and practical opportunities to apply skills in a library and community setting. All members of the cohort will complete a set of required core courses delivered by various presenters.

Required monthly cohort meetings will be held on the third Friday of each month from 1:00–2:30pm (starting on September 20, 2024) to encourage collaboration, reflection, and exchange of ideas.

As part of the program, participants will also choose additional learning events based on their individual goals, allowing for a customized experience.

For optimal participation in the online sessions, we recommend participants have access to a computer with a microphone and camera, as well as a private space to engage in conversations.

**Catalyst participants will be required to attend two in-person sessions:**

Tuesday, Nov. 12– Friday, Nov. 15, 2024 at the Asilomar conference center near Monterey and Monday-Wednesday, March 10-12, 2025 in Southern California.

There will also be an opportunity to present at the California Library Association conference in 2025. Travel costs for these in-person events, including transportation, hotel, and meals, will be covered by the project.

## **What should an applicant do if they have a conflict with the scheduled in-person meeting dates?**

Catalyst participants are required to attend the monthly cohort meetings, held the third Friday of each month from 1:00-2:30pm. They should also be available for the in-person meetings scheduled for Nov. 12-15, 2024 in Pacific Grove, CA, and March 03-05, 2025 in Southern California. These meetings are crucial for fostering a strong learning cohort. If an applicant has a conflict with these dates, they should wait until the following year to apply.

## **Will participants learn management skills?**

Catalyst's core courses will focus primarily on skills that relate to leadership, including communication, facilitation, navigating challenging situations, and community engagement. Individual participants in Catalyst will also have the opportunity to learn management skills, such as budgeting, supervision, and setting expectations, as part of their customized learning plan.

Additionally, California Libraries Learn (CALL) offers [Leadership for All](#) courses throughout the year. These courses cover a wide range of topics, including management skills like budgeting, supervision, and setting expectations. So even if you are not part of this year's Catalyst cohort, there will be plenty of opportunities to enhance your leadership skills. The Leadership for All courses will also be available to all cohort participants and can be integrated into their individual learning plan.

## **How much time will participants be expected to put into the Catalyst program?**

Program participants can expect to dedicate approximately 3 hours per week to Catalyst activities during the first 12 months of the program, which runs from September 2024 to August 2025. It's important to note that the time commitment may vary depending on the schedule of specific courses, with some weeks requiring less time and others requiring more.

During the final six months of the program (September 2025–February 2026, funding permitting), cohort members should plan to spend 3-4 hours per month on Catalyst activities, including attendance at a monthly Zoom meeting.

Given that many Catalyst program activities will be scheduled during regular business hours, it is important for applicants to have the support of their organization, ensuring they have the necessary work time to attend meetings, participate in group events, and travel to the two in-person meetings. Participants with particularly busy work schedules must be willing to complete activities on their own time, if necessary.

## **Will participants be expected to produce anything, such as a report, presentation, and/or toolkit?**

Yes, participants in the Catalyst program will have opportunities to contribute and create tangible outcomes.

The purpose of the program is to spark positive change in California libraries and have an impact beyond the cohort itself. Throughout the program, participants will be able to:

- Apply their newly acquired skills in their work environment.
- Share their learning with others through various formats, such as short presentations or toolkits.
- Collaborate with others to co-design library resources, programs, and services.
- Contribute to a statewide repository of promising practices.
- Explore potential library and community leadership roles, such as participating in a community organization or taking on a new group responsibility at the library.

The program encourages a continuous process of learning, reflection, and application. Catalyst cohort participants will build their knowledge and skills throughout the year, culminating in a project that exemplifies the principles of co-design (actively involving community members as equal collaborators in the design process) and can be used to inspire other libraries in the state.

### **What costs will be covered?**

Travel costs for in-person meetings (transportation, meals, lodging) will be covered, along with any required reading materials.

### **When is the application due?**

Applications are due by Wednesday, August 7 at 11:59pm.

### **When will applicants know if they have been selected for this year's cohort?**

The Catalyst team will inform all applicants of their status by Friday, August 30, 2024.

### **Tell me more about the mentoring aspect of Catalyst.**

Catalyst will offer mentoring opportunities for participants to learn from someone whose experience can provide meaningful guidance to support their work as library leaders. The mentoring program will be facilitated by a CALL leadership team member. Cohort members will be matched with a mentor for regular meetings to share and grow professionally over an extended length of time. The program is designed to be flexible enough for the mentor and mentee to tailor their relationship to meet their specific needs, but focused enough to provide valuable career development for both.

### **How can I learn more?**

**Information Sessions** will take place on Thursday, July 11 from 12:00 – 1:00pm and Tuesday, July 16 from 11:00am – 12:00pm. If you are unable to attend, don't worry! The meetings will be recorded and made available through CALL Academy.

[Register for the Catalyst Information Sessions](#)

**Office Hours** are also available July 8 to August 7 for those interested to ask questions and receive one-on-one support from a friendly Catalyst team member.

[Register for office hours](#)

You can also visit the [Catalyst webpage](#), or contact the Catalyst program coordinators directly: Maddy Walton-Hadlock at [mwaltonhadlock@cla-net.org](mailto:mwaltonhadlock@cla-net.org).