Examples of ways libraries are working towards outreach to underserved communities

(In library’s own words, taken directly from 2018 Ready to Read reports.)

From Coos Bay’s 2018 Early Literacy work:
We had a partnership with DHS Child Welfare and had two components. The first was to present elements from our Mother Goose on the Loose program at DHS Baby Group. This is a group of parents visiting their babies who are currently in foster care. The library’s Youth Services Librarian visited various baby groups once a week for about three months. During the 5 to 10-minute interactive presentation, parents learned one or two songs, rhymes, or knee bounces to do with their babies. Additionally, each participating family received a board book to keep (or send with their child’s foster family). The second part of the project was to create a mini-library for each of the seven visiting rooms at DHS, a total of 141 books. The books were carefully chosen by library staff. Topics range from characters dealing with complex emotions to more silly and fun books for parents to share with their children.

From Hood River’s 2018 Early Literacy work, called Library Express:
A few things that helped the success of the Library Express were:

- Identifying a concentrated neighborhood with targeted population rather than trying to serve an entire city/town.
- Engaging youth in service to their own community and relying on their insight
- Going door to door to introduce program and distribute information/registration forms
- Moving away from merely getting numbers to developing true friendships
- Sincerity, patience and concentrated focus are required
- Progress is acquired through: Action, Reflection, Consultation – Repeat
- Moving away from the “hand out” model (providing stuff)

The conscious goals of this program were to directly influence kids and youth in Odell. Raising capacity in all people is always important, but, over many years of effort to serve the Hispanic children in our community, we often find ourselves in the position of needing to bypass parents. It should be noted, however, that this strategy, when used, has been adopted with utmost respect and admiration for parents who are clearly doing their best to provide, protect and educate their children. We approach families with a humble posture of learning, knowing that the success of our services, and, consequently, the success of their children and grandchildren
hinge intimately on their innate knowledge of their own community and their support of our efforts.

With regards to our Library Express program, expecting parents to accompany their children was not realistic, and in order for our services to reach children and youth of Odell, we had to adjust to this reality.

Hiring Sandy Chijate and Montserrat Pedroza, who both live within the identified community we serve, as our Youth Outreach assistants was a turning point. They have become a bridge between the parents’ constraints and the services we want to provide to their children. They are known to their neighbors and admired and loved by the kids.

However, let it not be inferred that friendships with parents were not made. In our many neighborhood and door-to-door campaigns, we consistently met and spoke with parents. A few parents work at our local Rosaurer's store, and, since no week passes without going to the grocery story, positive conversations with them about their children's participation in the program are frequent.

**From Ledding Library's 2018 Early Literacy work:**
Our early literacy project aimed to improve outreach to high-risk children, making early literacy resources more accessible to families with barriers to library usage. Specifically, we targeted teen parents, Spanish-speaking families in Metropolitan Family Services’ prekindergarten Ready, Set, Go! program, Head Start, and JumpStart Kindergarten families. We purchased giveaway books (including Eensy Weensy rhyme books in English, Spanish & Russian) for all of these families, and then planned early literacy talks, outreach storytimes, and parent resource events off site at which to hand them out.

We tried to strengthen our partnership with each of these organizations in the process, encouraging them to include the library as a valuable early literacy resource for the families they serve. In this way, we hoped to increase the amount of time that the adults we reached through the project spent reading, singing, talking, writing, and playing with their young children.

With the teen parents, we did a storytime for the teens and their babies/toddlers at the school’s child care center to get acquainted. Four months later, we presented an early literacy talk to the teen parents in their classroom, offering fine vouchers, rhyme books, and 2 free books per child. The Ready, Set, Go! families came to the library for a monthly storytime, which included early literacy support/activities. During the year, the parents all got library cards and started using them. They each received 2 free books per child. We attended a Literacy Night at our local Head Start, presenting a family storytime and modeling ways to make reading interactive. We offered the parents fine vouchers, rhyme books, and 1 free book per child.
From Stanfield’s 2018 Summer Reading program:
The Summer Lunch Program brings in families that normally wouldn’t come to the library, giving them the opportunity to see what our library is all about, while at the same time encouraging families to sit and eat together while they talk about what they did for the Summer reading program.