

Project Justification

What need, problem, challenge, or opportunity will your project address, and how was it identified?

Hominy Public Schools (HPS) has consented for Osage County Interlocal Cooperative (OCIC) to apply for the Accelerating Promising Practices for Small Libraries grant on their behalf. The Oklahoma State Board of Education has approved, under state law, OCIC as a “local education agency for state and federal application, reporting and auditing procedures for its member districts.” Hominy is a member of OCIC. The school librarian, library assistants, and approximately 15 teachers will participate in **continued education** and approximately **276 6th-12th grade students** will be served. In the most recent biennial report released by the Rural School and Community Trust and its partners, *Why Rural Matters 2015-2016: Understanding the Changing Landscape*, Oklahoma landed on the list of the 10 states in greatest need of support for rural schools (The Rural School and Community Trust, 2017). With 75% of 513 school districts located in rural communities and the third highest percentage nationally of students enrolled in special education, yet the second-lowest per pupil spending for instruction and fifth-lowest salaries across rural districts nationally, educators face a particularly challenging task as they seek to overcome the demographic and resource-shortage risk factors facing their students. For instance, Hominy’s student body is comprised of 49.7% Native Americans, 78.8% of students qualify for free or reduced school meals, and 15% of the student population receives special education services. Hominy’s 2019 School Report card shows students fell significantly below state averages in academic achievement (13% HPS; 39% State); academic growth (23% HPS; 59% State); and postsecondary opportunities (HPS 25%; 46% State).

Utilizing American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards Framework for School Libraries along with the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE)’s Library Standards, the district administrator, Library Media Specialist (LMS), library assistant, and teachers reviewed the shared foundations and key commitments of the district to evaluate the current state of the library and create an action plan to support an engaging learning environment for all students. The team also focused on the AASL’s Future Ready Librarians’ (FRL) two guiding questions: 1) How can librarians and libraries support Future Ready Schools? and 2) How can librarians and libraries become more Future Ready? Students, parents and teachers were surveyed to provide feedback. Example questions: Why do you visit the library and how often, What’s your favorite thing in the library, What would you want to change, and What would you like the library to look like.

Identified Problem: Need: Increase access to courses and resources. Hominy struggles supporting students, teachers, and parents sufficiently and effectively to address the areas identified as needing improvement based on the analysis of the library and feedback from patrons. Students and parents are seeking options to traditional classroom experiences. Limited virtual school options have not been successful for most students and parents are not equipped for homeschooling. As evidenced by Hominy’s report card, students also lack opportunities for extra time for class assignments, dual enrollment courses, AP classes, electives of interest to them, and college and career readiness. Students lack access to additional college and career readiness courses and resources.

Need: Lack of collaborative spaces and individual learning environments. The school library has limited space with outdated furniture and computers limiting student collaboration and individualized learning, which was identified as a barrier by teachers. Students indicated they would like their library to be a more comfortable, an inviting place to read, do independent work/research, or meet with other students to socialize or participate in activities. In order for the district to support the goal of engaging and empowering students to become expert consumers of information and producers of knowledge, teachers and the librarian need to have committed spaces for activities and professional development on identifying and developing open educational resources, online supplemental curriculum, effective integration of technology, inquiry-centered pedagogy and effective collaboration across all content areas.

Proposed Solution: Project Connect will transform school library practice by improving and strengthening the school library’s ability to promote lifelong learning with access to digital content/resources through an online learning framework, extending library hours, creating a physical environment conducive to inquiry and individualized learning, and professional development for the LMS and teachers. The librarian, counselor(s),

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administrators, and teachers will collaborative identify online open educational resources, develop cross-curricular lessons with digital and online resources, partner with local universities for dual enrollment courses, and identify other online courses for credit (i.e., Edgenuity) to meet the academic needs of every student. Each student in grades 6-12 will complete Oklahoma's Individual Career Academic Plan (ICAP) to engage them in academic and career development activities. In addition to extended library hours, the T-Mobile for education program will be purchased to provide students with internet connectivity outside of school hours to access online coursework and utilize components of the ICAP program for career exploration. The library will provide a checkout system for students needing the T-Mobile wifi devices and chrome books.

What best practices or prior IMLS funded work will inform your approach?

Project Connect will align with the OSDE's Library Standards, the AASL National School Library Standards for Learners, and the FRL Framework to meet the IMLS **Goal 1: Promoting Lifelong Learning**. Specifically, Project Connect activities will be aligned with the FRL principles of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (Currates Digital Resources and Tools; Builds Instructional Partnerships) and Use of Space and Time for this proposal, expanding on other principles of Personalized Professional Learning (i.e. assist students in developing their ongoing ICAP), Robust Infrastructure, and Budget and Resources.

According to AASL, educational experiences for students in the 21st Century should go beyond the traditional core content areas and include inquiry-based learning (Levitov, 2016). The job of the LMS has evolved from literacy instruction to encompass multiple platforms and tools to providing access and instruction to support new technologies (Abram, 2015). Specific AASL Standards addressed with Project Connect include: Element 1.2 of Standard 1 sets the expectation for candidates to "make use of a variety of instructional strategies and assessment tools to design and develop digital-age learning experiences and assessments in partnership with classroom teachers and other educators" (AASL, 2012). Element 1.4 of Standard 1 continues to emphasize the use of technology in implementation of AASL's 2007 Standards for the 21st Century Learner, as well as the state student curriculum standards: "Candidates integrate the use of emerging technologies as a means for effective and creative teaching and to support P-12 students' conceptual understanding, critical thinking and creative processes" (AASL, 2012). Standard 3, Element 3.3, states that candidates should be able to "demonstrate their ability to design and adapt relevant learning experiences that engage students in authentic learning through the use of digital tools and resources" (AASL, 2012). Evidence-based research was reviewed and considered in regard to online learning as Project Connect was being developed. As individualized coursework and ICAPs are developed, the research findings will be utilized to inform the framework to insure success.

According to a 2017 report prepared by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), rural schools are less likely to be provided support by peers due to small school size, geographic distance from educator networks and a limited number of educators sharing similar professional interests. Librarians in low-income rural schools are isolated and lack support and opportunities to continue their professional education and improve their library programs. Project Connect will facilitate trainings and support for continued learning of teachers and the librarian enabling them to create equitable learning experiences for all students.

How would you qualify your library as small and/or rural?

An LEA is defined as rural by the state of Oklahoma according to the following criteria: 1) Twenty percent or more of children ages 5 through 17 years served by the LEA are from families with incomes below poverty; and 2) All of the schools served by the LEA are designated with a school locale code of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43. Hominy meets the criteria with 78.8% (2019 SDE Low Income Report) of students below poverty and a school locale code of 32.

Who will benefit from your project? How have you engaged them in your planning?

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The LMS, teachers, students and parents will benefit from Project Connect with access to online resources and learning opportunities that are currently unavailable. The LMS will be able to support the district with programs, services and spaces to foster a culture of collaboration and innovation to meet the needs of all students. Surveys and informal feedback were the key components in evaluating the current state of the library and developing an action plan for a future ready school. Feedback will continue to drive the implementation and evaluation of the project.

How will your project address the goals of APP, your selected project category, and the agency-wide goal you selected on the IMLS Program Information Sheet?

Project Connect addresses the Accelerating Promising Practices for Small Libraries goal of transforming school library practice in K-12 programs with schools by promoting lifelong learning. Unfortunately, children living in rural areas face multiple barriers in accessing learning experiences outside the school setting including families living with financial challenges, limited community resources, and transportation limitations. In rural areas, schools are often the only place that students might have access to these additional learning opportunities. Providing these experiences for students in the schools creates an access point in a setting where students already spend time, eliminating the aforementioned structural barriers. Students in rural low-income areas will acquire skills necessary to be competitive with peers across the state and nation through interactions with high-quality, online learning opportunities. The librarians, teachers, and students will benefit from Project Connect with access to resources and learning opportunities that are currently unavailable. The librarians will be able to support the district with programs, services, and spaces to foster a culture of collaboration and innovation to meet the diverse needs of all students.

Project Work Plan *What specific activities will you carry out?*

Goals, Objectives, and Activities
Goal: Create and implement a comprehensive plan to transform the school library into a inquiry-based learning and resource hub to prepare students for the future and empower them to reach their full potential.
<u>Objective 1:</u> <u>The percentage of students in grades 9-12 earning credits in postsecondary opportunities will increase by 20% by the end of the project as measured by the Oklahoma School Report Postsecondary Opportunities Indicator.</u>
<u>Activities:</u> 1) Hire a part time counselor/advisor to assist students and Hominy’s counselor who need additional support in completing ICAP, enrolling students, credit checks, etc.; 2) Promote career awareness by hosting family career nights, lunch and learn with community business professionals, etc; 3) Contract with consultants to provide professional development for collaboration of the librarian and teachers to promote inquiry-based learning with technology integration (<i>Surveys will be developed to reflect performance measures for lifelong learning</i>); 4) Partner with T-Mobile for wifi devices outside of school hours; and 5) Extend library hours during the week and summer to allow students additional time and opportunities to complete coursework.
<u>Objective 2:</u> <u>Online learning opportunities in multiple content areas will increase by 50% by the end of the project as measured by teacher and librarian lesson plans, student enrollment records, and student transcripts.</u>
<u>Activities:</u> 1) Purchase chromebooks for the library; 2) Purchase furniture to encourage collaboration and individual learning spaces; 3) Contract with consultants to provide professional development for collaboration of the librarian and teachers to promote inquiry-based learning with technology integration (<i>Surveys will be</i>

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developed to reflect performance measures for lifelong learning); 4) Develop a checkout system for T-Mobile wifi devices and chromebooks outside of school hours; and 5) Extend library hours to allow students additional time and opportunities to complete coursework.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project? Will partners be engaged and, if so, for what purpose?

Hominy’s LMS, Kelly Dyer has over 20 years experience in teaching and the last 10 years as a library media specialist (see K. Dyer resume). Ms. Dyer in collaboration with teachers and administrators will plan and implement all activities of the project. Debbie Enos, OCIC Assistant Executive Director, has over 8 years experience managing all aspects of grant activities, including writing the proposal, managing budget, ensuring annual reports are submitted, and evaluating program activities in relation to proposed timelines. Ms. Enos has a proven record of managing large federally funded programs (see D. Enos curriculum vita). For Project CONNECT, Ms. Enos will serve as the Project Director, working with Hominy’s LMS and administrator to ensure roles and responsibilities are carried out in accordance with the project objectives in a timely manner. A part time (.1 FTE) School Counselor/Advisor will work with students needing additional support to complete their ICAP and identify specific online resources to meet their academic needs. This position will be filled through OCIC staff possessing the necessary Oklahoma credentials of a school counselor/advisor.

What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?

Project Management Plan			
Activity	Person Responsible	Timeframe	Milestones
Notify stakeholders of grant award	Project Director	09/2020	District is prepared to begin implementation.
Contract with consultants for PD	Project Director	September of each year	Consultants are hired and have training materials prepared for dates scheduled.
Schedule and implement 12 hours of training per year	Project Director, LMS, and Administrator	Fall and/or Summer 2020, 2021 and 2022	Consultants have training materials and supplies prepared.
Students in grades 6-12 complete ICAP; review academic interests/needs	Project Director, LMS, Teachers, Administrator, and Counselor	09/2020-08/2022;	Students and parents complete the sections their responsible for on their ICAP; Students have devices and access to the online resources and coursework.
Schedule extended library hours	LMS	09/2020-08/2022; June each year for summer program	Students and families are aware of new library hours and afterschool and summer staff collaborate with LMS for activities.
Plan and host Family college and career nights, etc.	LMS	09/2020-08/2022	Communication with families on dates/times; students and family members are willing to participate.
Purchase technology and furniture	LMS	09/2020-08/2022	Outdated equipment and furniture is repurposed and/or moved to other areas and design of new area is completed.
Online courses and resources are	LMS and Teachers	09/2020-08/2022	Collaborative spaces are available and teachers and LMS have opportunities to meet and plan activities.

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accessible and implemented			
Annual reports are completed and published	Project Director	Aug 2021 for Year 1; Aug 2022 for Year 2	Activities are completed within designated time frames and LMS and district administrator supply data needed for reports.

A detailed budget and narrative has been provided for the two years of the project. The budget includes funds for managing and evaluating the grant; stipends for the LMS for extending library hours and professional development; stipends for teachers; 30% of the total budget for supplies to carry out the activities of updating the library collection and physical space; and consultants to provide professional development.

What are the risks to the project and how will you mitigate them?

Oklahoma has a high attrition rate for teachers. This year, 30,000 Oklahoma teachers left the state or left the profession. Continuing to train teachers to use the new technologies to support benefit all students will be a challenge. The project staff will have in place a new teacher orientation that will train the new staff on technologies. Hominy district is hopeful the new technologies and the new learning structures will entice teachers to want to stay in this rural community. New teachers having the support of the LMS to connect their practices and programs is an encouraging outcome we look forward to exploring.

How will you measure your progress and evaluate your project performance goals?

The overarching mission of public-school libraries is to provide access to information, educational opportunities and resources. The high school library, up to now, has not been used to leverage these opportunities for all students and community stakeholders. Below is a chart to demonstrate the plan to evaluate this project.

Evaluation Plan			
<u>Objective 1:</u> The percentage of students in grades 9-12 earning credits in postsecondary opportunities will increase by 20% by the end of the project as measured by the Oklahoma School Report Postsecondary Opportunities Indicator.			
Data Collected	Person Responsible	Instruments	Time Frame
Student postsecondary opportunities as reported to the OSDE	Hominy Administrators and staff; Project Director	Oklahoma State Department of Education Report Card system	Baseline data (Fall 2020); Annually (Fall 2021 and 2022)
<u>Objective 2:</u> Online learning opportunities in multiple content areas will increase by 50% by the end of the project as measured by teacher and librarian lesson plans, student enrollment records, and student transcripts.			
Number of online resources utilized by students	LMS, Classroom Teachers	Online courses and supplemental resources; Surveys from staff trainings	Baseline data (Fall 2020); Annually (Spring 2021 and 2022)

Project Outcomes

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What are the intended results and outputs of your project? How do they address the need articulated in your Project Justification?

Project Outcomes		
Outcomes	Milestones	Need Addressed
Staff are efficient and effective at cross-disciplinary inquiry-based lessons through online instruction and/or utilizing digital resources.	Trainings are completed in a timely manner for key personnel.	Increase access to courses and resources; Lack of collaborative spaces and individualized learning environments.
The school library is the hub for student learning.	The library is a welcoming, comfortable space for students, parents and district personnel.	Increase access to courses and resources; Lack of collaborative spaces and individualized learning environments.
Students are college and career ready with critical skills necessary to be users and creators of information and ideas.	Demographic barriers are overcome and students/families are utilizing the resources available to them.	Increase access to courses and resources; Lack of collaborative spaces and individualized learning environments.

How do you define success for your project?

Success indicators for the project will include positive feedback on surveys designed by the project director and LMS; successful completion of project activities within designated timelines; increased activity in the library through collaborative learning and teaching experiences, online learning, and students utilizing library resources; evidence of cross-disciplinary inquiry-based learning; and increases in student achievement data.

What is your plan for collecting and reporting data on your performance goals and outcomes?

The Project Director and LMS will inform and ask for feedback from district administrators, teachers, and parent representatives on an annual basis through parent teacher conferences for specific student performance, social media posts, and/or other forms of communication deemed appropriate for overall project performance. *(Surveys will be developed to reflect performance measures for lifelong learning)* Project’s purpose, trainings, events, program highlights, and reports will be disseminated through various formats including newsletters, informational meetings with stakeholders, social media, and announcements at staff meetings. Annual reports will be disseminated and will include: an executive summary on overall grant progress, project objectives performance, fidelity measures, project progress towards meeting established timelines and milestones, sustainability incorporation, professional development being provided along with training evaluations, and student academic performance.

How will you sustain the benefits of your project beyond the funding period?

District funds are currently being used for the full time LMS’s salary and will continue throughout the grant time period and after the grant ends. Additional funds from the local budget will be allocated to parent involvement and outreach by continuing ICAP and access to online learning for all students. Rural schools are less likely to be provided support by peers due to small school size, geographic distance from other teacher networks, and a limited number of teachers sharing similar professional interests; therefore, OCIC will facilitate follow up trainings on cross-disciplinary online learning and enable peer support across districts by hosting and coordinating trainings and establishing professional networks among other rural districts.

