Fairbanks Native Association

Project Narrative: Fairbanks Native Association's Literacy and Language Learning Project

Project Justification

Which program goal and associated objective(s) of the Native American Library Services Enhancement Grants program will your project address?

Fairbanks Native Association (FNA), current grantee under the IMLS Native American Library Services Basic Grants program, is applying for the Fiscal Year 2022 Native American Library Services (NALS) Enhancement Grant as an Indian Tribe as authorized by Doyon Resolution 2018-52. Doyon, Limited (Doyon) is the regional corporation established pursuant to the provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act for those Alaska Natives enrolled to the Doyon Region, and as such, is an Indian tribe as defined in the Indian Self Determination Act and certain other statutes and regulations. Through Resolution 2018-52, FNA is given the authority "apply for, negotiate, appeal from adverse decisions, and secure grants and contracts for non-profit related programs serving Native peoples of the urban Fairbanks area." A copy of Doyon's resolution granting this authority to FNA is included as an attachment.

This project addresses the grant program goal of "to both strengthen existing services and move quickly to adopt new and emerging technologies" through two components. The first component enhances community access to culturally relevant literature by expanding our library collection. The second component supports Indigenous language preservation and revitalization by developing digital, multimedia Denaakk'e (Koyukon Athabascan language) learning content for the public. The project will be administered under FNA's Johnson O'Malley (JOM) program, which makes a variety of Alaska Native and Native American (AN/NA) educational and cultural materials available to the public at the centrally located JOM program office, which is staffed Monday through Friday during regular business hours. The library services also include a "mobile" component, and materials are shared with the community at many youth education programs and community outreach events throughout the year.

The proposed Enhancement Grant project addresses the following grant goal and associated specific objective:

Goal 2. Improve educational programs related to specific topics and content areas of interest to library patrons and community-based users.
> Objective 2.2. Support the development and implementation of classes, events, teaching tools, resources, and other educational services.

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

Local data and evaluations identified the need for print and online literacy and language materials in the community. Specific needs related to each of the two proposed project components and the process by which they were identified are described below.

Component 1: Access to culturally relevant literacy materials
The need for more culturally relevant literacy material is identified through several sources. The first is from our FY19 and FY20 Native American Library Services Basic Grant. During our two years of implementation, the demand for reading materials abut Native peoples, topics, and themes and/or written by Native authors has been expressed by participants at our public events, including the JOM Summer Camp, Camp-Read-A-Lot, and Head Start graduation. At each event, literacy activities were completed with participants and literacy materials were handed out to families.

The other sources identifying a need for increased access to culturally relevant literature are our two educational and cultural projects serving AN/NA youth and families in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. Each of these projects, funded by the Department of Education, provides services to improve students' academic performance through culturally relevant strategies and practices. One activity that is part of the cultural programming and academic support services provided through these projects is reading books by Alaska Native authors. According to annual and summative project evaluation reports, "Teachers, parents, and students indicated a desire for more cultural knowledge and cultural activities. Alaska Native values, established by Elders years ago, became the basis for reaching students through discussions and stories and examples of how ancestral values are carried over into modern times to apply to our lives right now."[1]

Component 2: Demand for more Native language learning materials
The first source that identifies the need for Alaska Native language materials is a 2019 needs assessment conducted by Tanana Chiefs Conference in partnership with FNA. When asked to identify high priority needs, 64% of 850 respondents identified Native language learning as a priority need.

Another source that identifies the need for language learning materials is the evaluation from FNA's Denaakk'e (Koyukon Athabascan language) Dual Language Program (DLP) for 3 to 5 year olds. This program has created literacy materials that are available online. One recommendation from the evaluation is to provide more opportunities for students to practice speaking the Denaakk'e language out loud, suggesting the incorporation of spoken Denaakk'e into "activities that allow for repetition, games, and sharing words and phrases with families." Another important finding of the project evaluation was that most parents were interested in learning Denaakk'e alongside their children, but many did not have the language knowledge and confidence to pronounce the Denaakk'e words and phrases featured in the language learning materials. 55% of respondents to a survey of DLP parents/caregivers indicated that they had used the audio recordings of Denaakk'e words, phrases, and songs provided to them to support at home learning while the program was in remote learning mode due to COVID.

Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning?

The target group is the Fairbanks AN/NA community.

As stated above, FNA collects information from AN/NA families through community surveys and specific project evaluations. Through our projects and community events, we receive input on what community members want. This project is a result of that input through the various methods mentioned above.

Who are the ultimate beneficiaries of this project?

Increasing availability of culturally relevant literature and language learning resources ultimately benefits all community members - Native and non-Native alike – of all ages. Although the literacy and language materials to be acquired/developed and distributed/shared under the proposed project are specific to AN/NA cultures, themes, characters, topics, languages, and/or authors, the materials will be available to anyone in the community. FNA's literacy-themed outreach events are promoted community-wide, and no one is excluded from participating. Digital language learning content will be available world-wide via the internet. We believe that interacting with diverse literature promotes cross-cultural understanding and enriches all lives.

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[1] Summative Evaluation of the JOM Early Learners Project 2018-2019 through 2020-2021, page iii

Project Work Plan

What specific activities will you carry out in what sequence?

The specific activities for the two components are as follows.

Component 1. Acquiring and distributing Native literacy materials

Activity 1: Purchasing materials and publications - FNA's JOM Program Director will identify and purchase culturally relevant literature, emphasizing books for a range of reading abilities that are by AN/NA authors and/or about AN/NA peoples. To identify and source materials, the Director will refer to repositories such as the Cooperative Children's Book Center book lists and searchable database, the We Need Diverse Books website, Cynthia Leitch Smith's Teacher and Librarian Resources for Native American Children's and Young Adult Books, the Good Minds (First Nations) online bookstore, the Baby Raven Reads collection from Sealaska Heritage Institute, the Young Readers and Young Adults collections from the Birchbark Books website, the Colours of Us website, Social Justice Books, American Indians in Children's Literature, the American Indian Library Association, and the Alaska Native Knowledge Network.

Activity 2: Outreach and distribution of publications - In addition to making culturally relevant books and materials available to the public to check out from its centrally located offices and distributing them at community events, the JOM program will introduce the newly acquired materials to youth, families and community members during educational programs throughout the project period, including Camp-Read-A-Lot.

The products and services to be produced by the proposed project are inherently "public-facing," in that the materials to be acquired and/or created are intended to be used by a variety of user groups, including AN/NA youth and adolescents, families, and other FNA programs, such as Head Start.

Materials purchased with grant funds will be available to the public to check-out at the JOM Offices, regularly staffed during business hours Monday through Friday. It is more likely, however, that the public will encounter these materials at one of the many special community events that FNA puts on throughout the year. In that case, staff will be present to help youth and families select age-appropriate books to increase the likelihood that they will actually be read at home. Because literature distribution includes interactions between FNA staff and public members, FNA will also have the opportunity to discuss digital products with the public and will provide informational displays and live demonstrations.

Component 2. Developing and launching digital content for Denaakk'e language learning

The project will create interactive, engaging Denaakk'e language materials appealing to learners of all ages. FNA will contract with a digital application developer/designer to produce professional quality, interactive digital modules for Denaakk'e. The expected themes, subject to modification per Elder language experts as need be, will be: 1) Personal Interactions and Emotions, 2) My Family Kinship Terms, 3) Colors and Numbers, 4) Animals, 5) Clothing and Weather, and 6) Food and Mealtimes. These materials will be posted online and available to all community members interested in learning Denaakk'e.

We have chosen the Denaakk'e language for two reasons: 1) There are existing materials we can reference from our Denaakk'e Dual Language Program (DLP), and 2) Parents of DLP students have expressed interest in learning the language at home.

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

We do not expect any risks in carrying out Component 1: Acquiring and distributing AN/NA literacy materials. FNA has had two years of experience successfully carrying out these activities with our Basic Grant. This Enhancement project will use the same process for purchasing materials, advertising events, and conducting the community events. Families have expressed their appreciation for the culturally affirming materials, stating they promote self-esteem and cultural connectedness. For some of our families, the literacy materials provided by FNA are among only a few books in the home.

We do expect risks in implementing Component 2: Developing and launching digital content for Denaakk'e language learning. The biggest risk is the contracting of a consultant. From previous experience with this challenge, we have learned that there are tasks that may be completed before the consultant comes on board. We will use this mitigation plan if we cannot hire a consultant within the anticipated timeframe. This contingency includes developing the language proficiency level, main concepts, and words/phrases to emphasize for each unit. These tasks can then be adapted for digital platforms after the consultant comes on board.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

This JOM Director will serve as the project director and will be responsible for overseeing timely completion of the project. This position will also complete grant reporting. This staffing structure ensures continuity and efficiency, as the JOM Director also oversees our IMLS Basic Grant.

FNA is currently in the process of hiring a new JOM Director. Qualifications for the Director position include cultural sensitivity, demonstrated experience working effectively with Alaska Native populations, and skill in managing grants and ensuring grant compliance.

Until the position is filled, FNA Deputy Director Melissa Charlie, who supervises the JOM Director and provides oversight of the JOM program, will fulfill the duties of the JOM Director. Ms. Charlie has served on FNA's senior management team as Deputy Director since 2013. Among her other responsibilities, Ms. Charlie oversees FNA's Early Childhood Development (which includes a Denaakk'e Dual Language classroom) and Tribal Home Visiting programs.

Ms. Charlie has supervised past JOM Program Directors in implementing multiple projects and has served as temporary project director for these projects during previous JOM Director vacancies. She has extensive experience in ensuring project implementation continues regardless of staffing vacancies.

The JOM Program Director/IMLS project director will be solely responsible for planning and implementing Component 1: Acquiring and distributing Native literacy materials. Consolidating the responsibilities of this component in one staff position ensures that materials purchased with the requested Enhancement grant funds will complement and enhance the collection acquired with Basic grant funds.

For Component 2, the JOM Director/IMLS project director will collaborate with AN/NA elders and our Denaakk'e Dual Language Program staff for their expertise.

Please see the Schedule of Completion for regarding specific tasks associated with each component.

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

Time: FNA is requesting funds for the two year grant period, with the period of performance beginning on September 1, 2022 as per the Enhancement Grant announcement. Based on FNA's experience with acquiring and distributing materials under IMLS Basic Grants, the requested Enhancement Grant funds will allow us to increase the number of books/materials distributed per attendee at our public literacy outreach events. By extending the time period during which books may be acquired, the two year project period will facilitate the purchase of more materials by removing potential limitations associated with storing large quantities of inventory.

FNA has implemented a project similar to Component 2 to develop digital Denaakk'e language learning content. Although we met the objectives of the one year grant that supported that project, we learned that it takes more time to make professional quality, interactive, digital learning products. The proposed project will allow FNA to expand and enhance previously developed products and apply lessons learned.

Please see the Schedule of Completion for a detailed timeline of activity implementation.

Financial Resources- Fiscal management is centralized under the Director of Finance and Accounting. FNA uses a general ledger for each program with a separate cash receipts journal, cash disbursement journal, and general journal. All transactions are tracked through the Blackbaud Funds Accounting System. This allows for separation of grant funds and ensures that costs are reasonable, allocable, and allowable.

Personnel – No personnel funding is requested from this grant. The planning, implementation, and management of the project will be conducted by experienced FNA staff. As with many of our projects, our Elders provide expertise on Alaska Native knowledge and practices.

How and with whom will you share your work's general findings and lessons learned?

FNA will share our findings and lessons learned with the following:
- IMLS through our grant reports
- Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, our educational partner, with whom we collaborate regularly on literacy and language efforts
- Doyon Foundation, also our partner, who also provides services for Alaska Natives in the area

Project Results

What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified?

The need for more cultural literacy materials, both print and digital, is being addressed by this project.

Component 1: Acquiring and distributing Native literacy materials
Result 1. By the end of the project period, 1,400 culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate books, periodicals, and other literacy support materials will be distributed to community members during at least eight community events or programs.

Component 2: Developing and launching digital content for Denaakk'e language learning
Result 2. By the end of the project period, a cohesive, multi-unit, interactive product for Denaakk'e language learning will be completed and shared publicly (free of charge to users) via the internet.

Please see the Performance Measurement Plan for information on how data collection will support monitoring and evaluation of the Effectiveness, Quality, and Timeliness of results.

How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, capabilities, and/or attitudes of the target group change as a result of your project?

Component 1: Acquiring and distributing Native literacy materials - The rationale for increasing access to AN/NA literacy materials is to increase children's and parents' interest in reading (change in attitude), thereby increasing the amount of time that they spend reading (change in behavior), ultimately increasing their reading proficiency (change in capabilities) and fostering a sense of cultural connectedness and positive cultural identity (change in attitude).

Component 2: Developing and launching digital content for Denaakk'e language learning - The rationale for creating and publicly sharing interactive, engaging, and authentic Denaakk'e language learning modules is to increase time spent learning and practicing Denaakk'e language (change in behavior), thereby increasing users' ability to understand, speak, and read in Denaakk'e (change in knowledge and capabilities), fostering a sense of connectedness with and/or appreciation of Alaska Native cultural heritage (change in attitude), encouraging participants to incorporate the language into their daily lives (change in behavior), ultimately supporting the long-term sustainability and revitalization of the Denaakk'e language.

What tangible products will result from your project?

The tangible products to result from the proposed project are:

• Approximately 1,400 books reflecting the diversity of AN/NA peoples and cultures and/or created by AN/AI authors and illustrators will be acquired and distributed.
• Six digital Denaakk'e language learning modules will be created and publicly shared.

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

The JOM program has been in operation for nearly 30 years and has pursued an unwavering commitment to supporting culturally responsive education for local AN/NA youth. Some of the literacy materials purchased will remain with JOM so that they may be loaned to community members and used in schools and after school programs with FNA staff.

The digital products to be created will be developed with flexibility and accessibility in mind and will be available for users for years after the period of performance. As preserving Native language is a priority for FNA and our community members, the lessons learned developing the digital content will be applied to other language learning and digital product development projects.

Schedule of Completion for FNA's Literacy and Language Learning Project
FY22 Native American Library Services Enhancement Grant Program

Sept. 2022-August 2023	Sept.		Oct.		Nov.		Dec.		Jan.		Feb.		Mar.		Apr.		May		June		July		Aug.	
Process grant award	█	█																						
Develop request for proposals for digital product developer and advertise for 30 days	█	█	█	█	█	█																		
Attend required IMLS grantee meeting, month/date TBD			█	█																				
Review proposals and select digital product developer					█	█																		
Finalize digital product developer contract					█	█																		
Overall digital product concept and design planning						█	█	█	█	█														
Pilot module design and development											█	█	█	█										
Pilot module field testing/ stakeholder feedback															█	█								
Revise and refine pilot module																	█	█						
Release pilot module for public use																			█	█				
Create digital module 2																				█	█	█		
Create digital module 3																								█
Identify, source, and purchase culturally relevant books					█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Distribute books at community events and programs											█	█					█	█			█	█	█	█
Data collection and evaluation as per Performance Measurement Plan					█						█						█							█

Sept. 2023-August 2024	Sept.		Oct.		Nov.		Dec.		Jan.		Feb.		Mar.		Apr.		May		June		July		Aug.	
Interim performance and financial reports - Year 1 (dates TBD by program office)			█	█																				
Attend required IMLS grantee meeting, month/date TBD			█																					
Create digital module 3	█	█																						
Create digital module 4					█	█	█	█																
Create digital module 5									█	█	█													
Create digital module 6													█	█	█	█								
Internal testing of modules (e.g. Denaakk'e classroom, JOM programs) & user feedback	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█						
Module revisions according to feedback from user test groups															█	█	█		█	█				
Launch complete 6 module Denaakk'e learning resource																				█	█			
Identify, source, and purchase culturally relevant books	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█						
Distribute books at community events and programs			█	█	█	█	█	█					█	█			█	█	█	█	█	█		
Data collection and evaluation as per Performance Measurement Plan							█				█						█						█	
Final performance and financial reports - Year 2 (dates TBD by program office)																							█	

Digital Products Plan for FNA's Literacy and Language Learning project

Type: What digital products will be created?
The project will create interactive digital learning resources, organized into thematic modules, to support Denaakk'e language learning. The products will incorporate video, audio, graphics, and text elements into an interactive user experience designed to provide opportunities for listening, responding, speaking, and reading in Denaakk'e. Language content and skills practice will be embedded within culturally relevant context that highlights Denaakke' people, culture, history, values, ways of knowing, and traditional practices. The products will be developmentally appropriate for use by 3-5 year olds but will be appropriate for beginning Denaakk'e learners of all ages.

Availability: How will digital products be made openly available?
Digital products will be made openly available via FNA's website and may also be made available for download from disk to allow use by educators or other members of the public whose internet connectivity does not fully support web-based product functionality. To maximize access by broad audiences, the product design will be responsive for use users on a variety of devices, including computers, smart phones, and tablets and across operating systems. The learning modules will be loaded onto the Hatch tablets used in FNA's Head Start program, and students may take the tablets home with them so that they can access the products with their families outside of school time. FNA will encourage libraries, museums, and other community institutions and organizations to share the hyperlink to access the product on their public websites.

Access: What and limitations on use will apply to use of digital products? How will privacy concerns or cultural sensitivities be addressed, if applicable?
The modules will be shareable under a Creative Commons or other open source license to be determined. To ensure appropriate protections for culturally sensitive and/or personally identifying information, Elders and other community members who agree to be featured in video, audio, or still image files or who contribute oral or written content that is published as part of the product will a) be informed prior to participating by the Project Director or designee that the content is to be made publicly available and of the implications of such and b) will sign a use of likeness and/or intellectual property release form to document permissions and conditions of use as appropriate. Forms will remain on file with FNA.

Sustainability: How will you address sustainability of your digital products?
The digital products created with IMLS funding will be freely and readily available for use and reuse via a publicly available website. The products will be long-lived, and FNA will work with the contracted software developer to ensure that code used to create the product is stored in a repository such as GitHub and in FNA project files, so that it can be accessed and modified if needed to maintain functionality with evolving technology.