

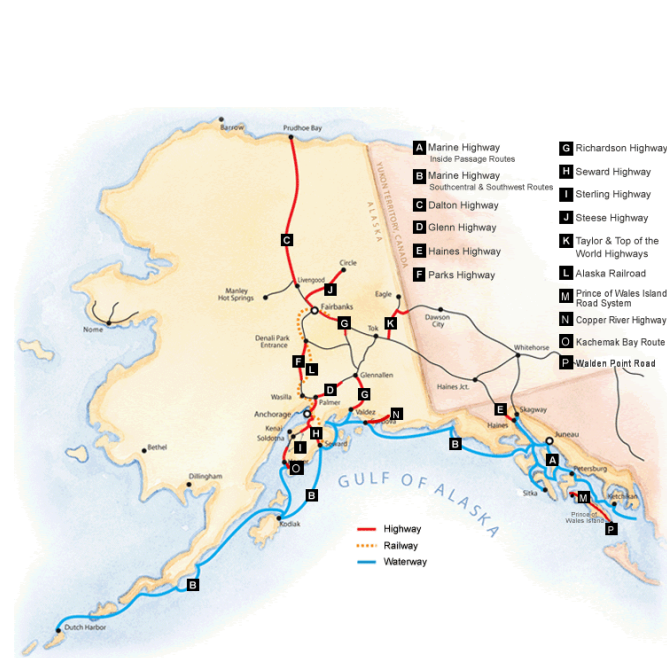
The University of Alaska Southeast (**UAS**) in collaboration with the Alaska Library Association (**AKLA**) respectfully requests \$150,000 for **Expanding Education Options for Alaska’s Library Workforce**. This two-year **planning grant** project will identify the training needs of the library workforce across the state of Alaska and develop coursework for their professional development.

The project will assess the needs of library staff and explore the feasibility, curricular content, and delivery modes for an online professional development credential emphasizing skills development for library paraprofessionals in underserved communities throughout the state. As a result of the project, as needs dictate, we will develop a workforce readiness curriculum and affordable online microcredential aligned with the American Library Association (ALA) [Core Competencies](#) and the Alaska Library Association [Culturally Responsive Guidelines for Alaska Public Libraries](#).

## 1. Project Justification

**Expanding Education Options for Alaska’s Library Workforce** addresses the 21st Century Librarian Program Goal 3 (*Enhance the training and professional development of the library and archival workforce to meet the needs of their communities*), and Objective 3.3 (*refine training programs...build skills and expertise...lifelong learning*). Alaska is a large state full of many small communities, with numerous unique challenges. Developing training programs that consider these challenges while taking into account best practices, professional standards, and cultural humility will improve the quality of the library workforce in the state. Doing so in a way that can be sustained over time will also help support the future of the profession.

Fig. 1



**“ We aren’t on the road system, so the only way in or out is by airplane. Bethel is the hub community for our region, and people in the surrounding villages come to Bethel to shop and get medical care. We are located on the Kuskokwim River, which is also the local highway. People travel to surrounding communities by boat in the summer and by truck in the winter when the river freezes. The river also provides ample food for our community, and fishing and salmon are an important part of life here. Our community is about 65% Alaska Native, and other than English the primary language spoken is Yupik, one of the largest aboriginal languages spoken in the United States. Public resources are scarce in rural Alaska, and the library serves an important role in the community and region by being one of the only places in the region to access free computers, internet, and books. We also provide a lot of community programming for kids, adults, and families.**

– Kuskokwim Consortium Library Director Theresa Quiner

Fig. 1 Source: *Kuskokwim Consortium Library is an example of a community library in Alaska that is not on the road system.* / [Read.gov interview](#) | Image: Alaska road system in red, plus the waterway ferry system in blue / [Alaska DOT](#)

According to the [2022 Public Library Survey](#) conducted by the Alaska State Library (ASL), there are 94 public libraries throughout the state (20 combined school/community libraries) and a total of 304 employees. Of those reporting employee numbers, 41 libraries (almost half) have 2 or fewer total employees, and some are entirely volunteer run. The three urban hubs, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau, account for over half of all the library employees with an MLS. With a large number of volunteers in Alaska's libraries (1,510), library staff are also tasked with providing leadership and training, which may be a challenge if they themselves do not feel adequately prepared.

Tribal libraries aren't formally defined in Alaska, however [the Alaska Library Network provided Native American Library Services: Basic Grants](#) to 55 tribal libraries in 2022. Many of these overlap with the numbers for public or school libraries. However, regardless of Tribal affiliation, libraries across Alaska will be serving a significant number of Alaska Native patrons. The [Bureau of Indian Affairs estimates](#) over 180,000 enrolled Tribal members with 228 Federally Recognized Tribes in Alaska. Most of the rural communities across Alaska are Federally Recognized Tribal Villages with one reservation, in Metlakatla. As such, Alaska's library workforce serves these communities through all types of libraries. However, these communities have unique needs that staff may not be trained to fill, such as culturally-responsive programming, scheduling that honors the subsistence calendar, or preservation of recordings of Elders. Staff at these libraries could benefit greatly from this project.

The data on school libraries are not as up-to-date. The [2011-2012 school year NCES data](#) show 510 schools in Alaska, with 380 school libraries. Both of these numbers are higher than a number of other states, generally those either small in size or small in population. While we do not at this time have data on the status of the staff at these school libraries, we do know that the [Alaska Association of School Librarians has a value that](#) "every student in the state needs and deserves the services of a certified school librarian." This goal is not currently being met, and library staffing varies across school type and district.

As a state, Alaska does not require formal certification for library paraprofessional staff. While many professional librarian positions may require a master's of library science (MLS), in some cases the degree will be preferred rather than required due in part to the challenges of attracting qualified applicants. These factors result in library staff who may have gaps in their foundational knowledge and/or skills which we plan to identify and address through our project. For example, at the [Honoring Alaska Native Heritage through Tribal and Community Libraries](#) institute, attendees included library advisory board members, volunteers, and library staff from remote and rural libraries, and the programming included introductions to foundational skills, such as the benefits of professional association membership, on library staff development through support services provided by the Alaska State Library, and other professional resources throughout the state.

Many libraries in Alaska have a small staff where pursuing training opportunities is a challenge that could require closing the library to allow staff to attend. [Alaska has many incredibly rural and remote communities](#). The barriers to providing training to these remote communities include bandwidth (for online offerings), geography, weather, and travel. Many communities are roadless and only accessible by aircraft, boat, snowmachine, or trucks driven over frozen rivers and tundra. Therefore, equitable access to meaningful skill building is a major challenge. The project team's own experiences navigating these challenges helped to inform our planning project question, "what can we do to help improve the training and workforce development available to library staff across Alaska?"

[Alaska's labor forecast for libraries](#) shows moderate growth, 4.6%, for "Librarians And Media Collections Specialists," and 2.44% for "Library Technicians" between 2020 and 2030. These two job families are also forecasted as having 44 annual openings. However, the data above, particularly the detailed public libraries data, show that there is already a potential training need for existing library staff, along with support for new staff coming in from turnover and growth.

We support the credentials of the profession and believe libraries should be led by an individual with an MLS. However, returning to the public library data, of those reporting financial data, 36 libraries have total revenues of less than \$66,000. [Salary.com lists the middle range \(25%-75% of salaries\) of MLS librarians](#) in

Alaska as between \$66,372 to \$88,447. As such, these 36 libraries could never, with their current full budget, equitably pay a single MLS librarian, but they represent over a third of the public libraries in the state. These libraries and communities still deserve training and professional development for those that work there. While there are options and opportunities for pursuing an online MLS from out of state, our project will consider providing professional training to library staff with lower barriers to entry.

### **The Target Group of *Expanding Education Options for Alaska's Library Workforce***

The target audience for this planning grant project is the library industry in Alaska and the communities they serve, primarily the 84 public libraries outside of the urban hubs of Anchorage, Juneau, and Fairbanks. Additionally, any public and school libraries we encounter which are not currently represented in the Alaska State Library data. Our educational institution (UAS) serves the needs of students pursuing workforce development credentials, bachelor's, and master's degrees, and as such has experience offering curriculum for a variety of fields. However, new workforce development programs are typically initiated by industry partners approaching the university to express the need. Industry partners help to define the need with existing data, may provide some start-up funding, and review of program learning outcomes. In our case, we are working from our own identification (as experienced members of the Alaska library workforce) of the perceived need, and approaching industry to evaluate our understanding, to survey current and anticipated future needs, and determine preferred content and modes of delivery.

As our Project Work Plan details below, we will coordinate with partners that are currently supporting professional development in the state. Through their connections and others we make, we will connect with current library staff, library management, and those overseeing libraries to identify their needs and how we might assist in addressing them.

### **The Ultimate Beneficiaries of *Expanding Education Options for Alaska's Library Workforce***

The beneficiaries of this project will be library staff throughout our state who need professional development as well as the communities they serve. Our expectation is that we can create a microcredential that will meet their needs in terms of delivery timing, method, content, and affordability.

As the demographic and employment data show, there is clearly a need for more trained library staff and ongoing training with a planned curriculum that is offered on a recurring basis.

### **How *Expanding Education Options for Alaska's Library Workforce* differs from, complements, and builds upon existing practice**

There are only a handful of library science classes taught at Alaska colleges & universities and no degree programs. Out-of-state programs have partnered with Alaska to provide Master's in Library Science (MLS) training to Alaskans, such as the [\*Bridging Knowledge: Supporting Indigenous Scholars into the Field of Librarianship\*](#) project funded through IMLS. We support these efforts, with Co-PI Lamb having served as a mentor of the *Bridging Knowledge* project. Our project aims at providing training at a lower level and a lesser commitment than a Master's in Library Science degree. One potential outcome is a pipeline of interested students feeding into MLS programs.

We propose an Alaska-based program at UAS, because we know the challenges and have the experience to analyze and address the need in an Alaskan context. Collectively our grant team of four library faculty have 40+ years of teaching and library leadership experience in Alaska. We have taught 3 existing courses: *Introduction to Academic Library Research*, *Special Topics in Library and Information Science*, and *Internet and Society*. Project librarians have each taken part and/or led culturally-responsive education training, including the popular *Decolonizing Our Spaces* Professional Learning Community, and we have taught online and in-person courses as well as drop-in sessions with faculty colleagues across the disciplines taught at UAS.

Our potential program partner, Alaska State Library (ASL) [supports public and school librarian professional development](#), including through continuing education grants. They more directly provide

professional development by [purchasing blocks of seats in Infopeople courses](#). For example, in FY24 they sponsored 50 total seats that they spread equitably across the state. We reviewed some of the data they have on filling course seats, and while they have been able to do so most years this has been offered, it has only been an option in 2016, 2019, 2020, 2022, and now 2024. This is an excellent opportunity, and our desire would be to find ways to complement *Infopeople* offerings, which provide professional development options but for a small number of participants. We would also pursue having our courses qualify for use of ASL continuing education grant funds.

The American Library Association (ALA) supports the [Library Support Staff Certification](#) (LSSC) program, with approved providers listed in a course catalog. [Searching the catalog](#) for Alaska reveals those same *Infopeople* courses that ASL is already supporting which include the Fundamentals courses from ALA's Core (courses formerly offered by the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services). While other online courses are available, the offerings lack coverage of topics that would benefit library staff in Alaska and other states serving rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. Our project will identify/confirm these specific areas of need and develop courses/resources to complement the LSSC by emphasizing how library services and values are informed by community input and needs.

AkLA provides professional development through an annual conference, however, these offerings are much shorter than the course offerings above. The AkLA conference is well attended (average annual attendance of 250), but this figure represents a small part of the overall library workforce (given that this number includes librarians from academic and special libraries). A three day conference cannot provide the level of training and continuing education some library staff need, and it is not accessible to all library staff across the state. By partnering with UAS on this project, AkLA will provide valuable insight on how we can expand access to training.

Other professional and continuing education training is available or has been offered. These include professional webinars and online resources which are curated and listed on the ASL website. An example of a more intentional effort is the [Alaska Native Libraries, Archives, and Museums](#) initiative. The *Honoring Alaska Native Heritage through Tribal and Community Libraries Institute* (2018) created a number of Alaska-specific presentations and resources for library staff. Many of these resources are about specific Alaskan connections, such as the archives for Film, Native Languages, and for Oral History, and collections and programming in the Alaskan and Alaska Native context. Our curriculum will build upon many of these topics and highlight these valuable resources.

## 2. Project Work Plan

### Planning Grant Goal:

Assess the needs of library staff and explore the feasibility, curricular content, and delivery modes for an online professional development credential with an emphasis on skills development for library paraprofessionals in underserved communities throughout the state.

### Research Questions

1. Do paraprofessional library staff working in Alaska's libraries feel adequately prepared/trained to effectively do their jobs and serve their communities?
2. What are the unique, unmet training needs of paraprofessional library staff in Alaska? What specific skills do paraprofessional library staff believe are needed to better serve their communities?
3. What are the unmet community needs? Are the needs due to various conditions including rural/remote nature of communities (isolation, staff turnover, limited resources), Indigenous cultural values and practices of the communities served, and/or other factors?



4. To what extent do rural/remote Alaska public and school library organizations value and support professional development for their staff?
5. What curriculum can we develop to improve the training and workforce development available to library staff across Alaska? Consider content, format, delivery, and cost.

### ***Activities to be Accomplished Over Years One and Two***

**Objective 1: Conduct an Environmental Scan**

**Objective 2: Seek Stakeholder Input**

**Objective 3: Synthesize Findings of Environmental Scan and Stakeholder Input**

**Objective 4: Pursue Professional Development**

**Objective 5: Develop Curriculum**

**Objective 6: Pilot Course**

**Objective 7: Share Methods & Findings**

Details on the timing of these activities can be found in the attached Schedule of Completion.

### **Objectives**

#### ***Objective 1: Conduct an Environmental Scan***

In the first year of this **planning grant** we will conduct an environmental scan to assess the current state of the workforce. We anticipate this analysis to include:

- A literature review (paraprofessional library staff development, service to rural and remote communities)
- Review of recent job postings in Alaska (looking both at job requirements and duties)
- Course sequences and offerings of [existing library certificate and degree programs](#) (at undergraduate/non-Master's level)
- Course offerings and other professional development offered via the Alaska State Library (ASL)
- Course offerings listed as part of the ALA Library Support Staff Certification (LSSC). Analysis of certification data by state (are Alaskan's pursuing this pathway?).
- Cost analysis of existing offerings (LSSC, others) and analysis of affordability of proposed UAS offerings
- Analysis of training or certification requirements for paraprofessional library staff in other states serving rural/remote populations
- Identification of gaps in availability of continuing education opportunities for school librarians (certified school librarians have different credentialing requirements)

#### ***Objective 2: Seek Stakeholder Input***

This objective is to solicit stakeholder input from the project's target group - the current library industry, workforce, and supported communities. This includes gathering input from partners and expanding our partner connections, as the networking and data of AkLA, ASL, and other groups, such as the Alaska Association of School Boards and the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL), will enhance our efforts.

Input will be collected using a mixed methods approach to include surveys (with completion incentives), interview (formal and informal), and focus groups. The target audiences for each method will be: surveys (library employees and volunteers, community members/library users), interviews (library leadership including library directors, certified librarians, others overseeing libraries), and focus groups (surveyed library employees expressing an interest in further project participation, pilot course participants). Focus groups with library leaders will be used prior to the survey to help develop survey questions (library leaders perceptions of training need) and afterward to share results. Our intent is to collect quantitative and qualitative data to allow survey participants flexibility in describing training needs. Anonymous surveys will provide a link for participants to

enter a drawing for completion incentives and to express interest in further project participation (interviews, focus groups, pilot course). Surveys will be distributed broadly and ask participants to identify their role (library support staff, librarian, director, etc) in order to assess how training needs/perceptions differ by role. Sample survey questions include:

- I feel adequately prepared/trained to effectively do my job and serve the community (Likert scale)
- My employer requires ongoing continuing education/professional development (Likert scale)
- My employer supports my participation in continuing education (e.g. participate on work time or with funding to participate) (Likert scale)
- My library provides methods for community input/feedback related to library services (Likert scale)
- As it relates to providing library services to my community, I wish I knew more about: (open ended or mark any and include sample LS topics)
- I am motivated to participate in professional development by: (open ended or mark any and include internal and external motivators)

We will attend the fall ARSL conference in year 1, since an essential aspect of this project is identifying the needs of Alaska's rural and remote library workers and their communities. We hear from Alaska library staff members in small communities that this organization is beneficial to their work.

We will pursue direct contact with library leadership and employees around the state and will utilize library/school leadership to encourage staff survey completion and other project activities. We will present at the AkLA conference in year 1 to communicate the project and recruit additional participants for focus groups and interviews. Other communication channels will be used, including the email lists for AkLA, for library directors, and the Alaska Association of School Librarians. We will develop contact lists and data collection methods while confirming our work is done ethically and reviewed by the university Institutional Review Board.

### ***Objective 3: Synthesize Findings of Environmental Scan and Stakeholder Input***

Following the collection of qualitative and quantitative information from Objectives 1 and 2, we will synthesize these findings into a usable framework. This activity will occur at the end of year 1, and beginning of year 2. Details on the documentation we anticipate creating is included in the Digital Products Plan attachment.

### ***Objective 4: Pursue Professional Development***

Because of the fact finding and needs assessment in the previous objectives, we anticipate needing to pursue professional development for our own purposes for curriculum development and eventually as instructors. This will include purchasing books to help inform our own understanding of the topics we uncover in the environmental scan and for evaluation of potential course materials for use in the curriculum we develop. Relevant support materials in library science topics may also be purchased, as without an academic program to support, current UAS library holdings in library science materials are dated. This activity will occur during the summer at the end of year 1 / beginning quarter of year 2.

### ***Objective 5: Develop Curriculum***

We will develop course sequencing and program learning outcomes for the potential microcredential, and the specific course learning outcomes and content. The higher level work, and work on the initial pilot course, will begin alongside the synthesis of findings at the end of year 1. Dedicated curriculum development will continue through year 2. Of our project personnel, Kaia Henrickson has coursework and experience in curriculum development, and David Cox has served as UAS undergraduate curriculum committee chair and is well acquainted with the software used and the proposal process.

While [microcredentials](#) have not been formally defined at UAS it is an emerging concept in higher education and other fields. For the purpose of this planning grant we anticipate a credential comparable to an Occupational Endorsement, which ranges from 9 to 29 credits, or a minor with at least 15 credits (something

that we could likely add as an option for existing UAS students who might be interested, alongside our ultimate beneficiaries). Affordability will be a guiding factor for any proposed microcredential to support the library paraprofessional workforce. Objectives 1-2 will help develop a better understanding of the needs and which vehicle (stand alone course vs. credential) is the best fit to support the workforce.

### **Objective 6: Pilot Course**

We plan to offer at least one pilot course during year 2 of the project (Spring 2026). We will recruit students from the pool identified in Objective 2 and will seek input from potential students on preferred course modality (synchronous / asynchronous) which we will need to designate prior to September 2025. The pilot course will provide an overview of foundational skills in the library profession with an emphasis on service to rural and remote communities. As per our diversity plan our course content will be culturally relevant and sensitive to Alaska Native teaching and learning styles and incorporate Universal Design. We will develop the pilot course as the first course of the microcredential sequence and aim to enroll 10 students. Student support is included in the project budget to subsidize participation in the pilot course. Course participant feedback (student course ratings) will be utilized to refine the course and to inform additional curriculum development. If we find that we have enough interest from stakeholders, or get far enough ahead on planning, we may pilot more than one course. Pilot courses can be offered using the library's existing special topics course number (LS x93) which allows us flexibility within the curriculum development process and allows for variable credit (1-3 credits) and course level (193/293/393) offerings (1-3 credits). These variable options also allow for scheduling flexibility (9-16 weeks) and course cost control (tuition is per credit). The UAS curriculum development process provides opportunities to iterate new ideas using special topics courses, and ongoing evaluation of courses and programs through annual program evaluations and 6-year program reviews.

### **Objective 7: Share Methods & Findings**

We will produce a white paper explaining our methods, results, and including our data if possible. We would likely publish this in our Institutional Repository, [ScholarWorks@UA](#). Results will be shared with partners and the target group. We also plan to share findings in year 2 at the spring AkLA conference and at the American Library Association annual conference (Chicago, summer 2026).

### **After the grant period**

[Curriculum proposals submitted at UAS](#) by October 1 are guaranteed to be considered for the following year's course catalog, and so our goal is for all course and program proposals to be completed and submitted by this date (October 1, 2026), (post-planning grant period). Because they will then be moving through the curriculum review process for the following year, we may also pilot additional courses throughout that year, if demand warrants.

We plan to attend the ARSL conference that fall (2026), which falls outside the grant period. Here we will present the findings and results to a wider audience which would be appropriate for considering our work in their own rural and small library context.

### **Project Personnel and Partners**

The main grant personnel will be the four faculty librarians at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS): **Jennifer Ward**, Primary Investigator, Professor of Library Science and Outreach Librarian. As liaison to the School of Education, she has taught education research courses and invited library instruction sessions in education, business, social sciences and humanities for over 20 years. Ms. Ward also brings experience in grant writing and management.

**Jonas Lamb**, Co-PI, Associate Professor of Library Science and Public Services Librarian. He is currently the past president of AkLA. He has taught a number of special topics courses, as well as LS220

Internet and Society, and has taught general education writing courses. Among his liaison duties is the School of Career Education, where he supports UAS vocational education efforts from welding to health sciences.

**David Cox**, Co-PI, Associate Professor of Library Science and Technical Services Librarian. He recently served as UAS Undergraduate Curriculum Committee Chair for three years. Beyond his knowledge of the curriculum processes at UAS, he serves on a number of initiatives across Alaska to indigenize, decolonize, and otherwise improve metadata and cataloging of materials in the Alaska Library Catalog and beyond. He attended the Honoring Alaska Native Heritage through Tribal and Community Libraries institute in 2018.

**Kaia Henrickson**, Associate Professor of Library Science and Information Literacy Librarian. She has a Master of Arts in Teaching and almost 20 years of teaching experience. In addition to teaching library science courses at UAS, she also facilitates professional development for faculty and staff on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at UAS through workshops and professional learning communities.

**AkLA (Alaska Library Association)** is a nonprofit for the employees, volunteers, and advocates at academic, public, school, tribal, and special libraries in Alaska. Although Alaska is the largest state in the nation, our library association is a close-knit and mutually supportive community. [AkLA has a stated value](#) to promote “professional growth through continuing education for library staff at all organization levels and stages of their careers.” AkLA is the primary partner for the project.

Additional partners will be invited to participate including the Alaska State Library (**ASL**) which promotes and coordinates library services and professional development to the library community and serves as the primary research library for state government.

### **Evaluation and Iterative Design**

Project Staff will have a monthly check-in meeting on the project objectives and submit quarterly individual progress reports to the Project Director (see Performance Measurement Plan Effectiveness and Timeliness indicators). By the end of January of Year 1 we will ask two outside readers to review our Environmental Scan and ask for constructive feedback on the scope and quality of our review methodology and our initial survey questions (Quality indicator). Any pilot course taught will incorporate formative and summative student evaluations for continuous improvement.

### **Tracking Project Progress**

PI Jen Ward will keep track of work on our objectives throughout the project period. See the Performance Measurement Plan and Schedule of Completion. White Paper will be developed based on the findings of the Environmental Scan and Survey Instruments created based on those data. See the Digital Products Plan.

### **Dissemination of Project Findings**

We will develop a white paper to include an executive summary of project activities, highlights of key findings, recommendations for next steps, summaries/aggregated data on survey reach (response rate), survey respondent demographics/geographic representation, and unattributed qualitative responses from focus groups/interviews. The white paper will be distributed through conference presentations, professional email lists, and published open access online using a Creative Commons license. Our course offerings will eventually live in the [UAS course catalog](#). We will pursue listing these course offerings (and microcredential) on visible and relevant websites like the ASL professional development pages and the ALA Library Support Staff Certification Program page.

More on the specifics of disseminating project findings can be found in the Digital Products Plan. This includes considerations for due care in protecting the privacy of respondents, and following all requirements of our Institutional Review Board.



### 3. Diversity Plan

#### **Strengthening Libraries' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Contributing to the Library Workforce**

The recruitment, development, and retention of a diverse library workforce is central to *Expanding Education Options for Alaska's Library Workforce*. The project is designed to determine what training is needed in remote, rural, and Indigenous serving communities across Alaska (with applications for states with similar service areas) and to discover the best way to provide that training.

Alaska is home to 228 Federally recognized Indigenous tribes and 20+ distinct Indigenous languages. Southeast Alaska is the ancestral home of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples. Their presence extends back thousands of years. As of Fall 2023, [22% of UAS students are Indigenous](#), and [35% have a rural Alaska background](#). The advancement of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian cultures and languages are increasingly reflected in UAS programs. The field of library and information science and the composition of Alaska's library workforce are not racially or ethnically diverse. The project will identify the unique training needs of the workforce with an emphasis on empowering existing rural library staff to remain in their communities, and to incorporate cultural competency content into any curriculum to ensure all staff are better positioned to serve in rural and Indigenous-serving communities. Example areas of need include culturally-responsive programming, library scheduling that honors the subsistence calendar, documentation and preservation of traditional knowledge, and the development of relationships to ensure library services are aligned with community defined needs.

#### **Including a Diversity of Perspectives and Practices**

This planning grant will seek extensive stakeholder input, to bring in perspectives from the communities that our professional development offerings would serve. It will model the collaborative, community needs assessment approach critical to cultivating a culturally-responsive library. Project personnel will seek a diversity of perspectives by pursuing professional development in areas outside of our existing specializations, learning about and seeking to incorporate both best practices and diverse practices. Guided by the [Culturally Responsive Guidelines for Alaska Public Libraries](#), our project will incorporate practices such as Universal Design for Learning, cultural humility, cultural competency, and Indigenous practices as documented and discussed in the book [Stop Talking](#). We will integrate existing curricular resources identified in our environmental scan and those developed through two IMLS supported projects; *Bridging Knowledge: Supporting Indigenous Scholars Into the Field of Librarianship* and *The Raven Reads at the Library Toolkit*.

#### **Involving Relevant Participants and Communities**

We will utilize partner contacts and data to reach out more holistically to libraries around the state, rather than relying solely on professional outlets such as the AkLA email or conference. This will assist in getting input from staff and communities where there is not a connection to the professional association, which we predict are also communities more in need of connecting to professional development opportunities. It takes time to build relationships in small communities, to be able to get feedback from the community itself, and so our hope is to get some assistance from librarians at hub libraries or who are interested or engaged with the project to help seek community input.

This broader stakeholder input will then help us define the needs, problems, and challenges that we can then attempt to meet with a microcredential. The input will also help with creating and implementing the curriculum, as well as things like the delivery method, based on the needs identified.

### 4. Project Results

*Expanding Education Options for Alaska's Library Workforce* has as its major outcome the planning of a sequence of new courses to create a microcredential to support the workforce development needs of the library industry in Alaska. The challenge we have identified is that there are some excellent but limited

resources at the moment, including through AkLA, ASL, and ALA. Major objectives of this **planning project** include determining what the gaps are in both content and reach of these offerings, and to develop complementing materials.

We believe this project is necessary because a program designed to support Alaska's unique circumstances does not currently exist. And, other states with significant rural and remote communities, large Indigenous populations, and/or lacking library science programs in their universities, will find our methods and findings to be valuable to analyze their own workforce development needs. Our dissemination planning, discussed in the Work Plan above, includes presenting at the Association of Rural and Small Libraries conference after the grant period (fall 2026).

We plan to share items from throughout our objectives, including from our environmental scan and stakeholder input, both in compiled forms, such as a white paper or case study, and through open sharing of the materials online. Details of the documentation we anticipate generating, and our plans for the access and availability of the materials, can be found in the attached Digital Products Plan document.

### **Ensuring Project Deliverables are Broadly Usable**

We will meet a broad variety of needs with our project materials by providing both raw data and analysis. Examples include, anonymized data from survey instruments, survey questions along with a white paper summarizing project findings and recommendations. Tangible final results such as course syllabi will also be made available. Because self-published open access materials can be hard to discover and verify on the internet, we will also disseminate project findings through conference presentations. Several options have been discussed and are detailed in the Project Work Plan and in the Digital Products Plan attachment.

### **Sustaining the Benefits of the Project Beyond the Conclusion of the Project**

One of the benefits of a **planning grant**, rather than an implementation grant, is the exploration of how to create a curriculum to offer on an ongoing basis at UAS. This will create a sustained training pipeline to complement existing one-time grant funded training, train-the-trainer training, annual or irregular conference and online webinars, and other sources of professional development and skills building.

Once the program is approved through the UAS curriculum process, librarians will have faculty workload credits assigned to instruction. Courses will be mapped out into the future via [the UAS six-year course sequence](#). Additional instructors or partners, such as guest lecturers in relevant subject areas or adjunct/dual-appointment faculty from other University of Alaska libraries will be sought out as appropriate.

### **Future Research & Conclusion**

The *Expanding Education Options for Alaska's Library Workforce* planning grant will help assess the unique training needs of Alaska's library workforce and support a more comprehensive goal to create and deliver a workforce development microcredential tailored to the unique needs of diverse library paraprofessionals working in underserved communities in Alaska. The results of this project will benefit other states with libraries serving significant rural/remote areas and large Indigenous populations. Future research areas relevant to this project include, developing continuing education (CE) for staff as a core value of organizational culture, building career advancement opportunities into paraprofessional job families (CE credits, microcredentials, degrees), and investigation of the impacts of organizational support for continuing education on job satisfaction and retention of library paraprofessional staff.



YEAR TWO (August 1, 2025 through July 31, 2026)

	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JULY
Review Survey Results and Synthesize w/ E.S	<i>Developing a framework</i>											
Professional Development	<i>Collections / Curriculum books purchasing</i>											
Curriculum Development												
Pilot Course						<i>Spring 2026 semester: Pilot LS Special Topics</i>						
Review Student Evaluations												
Write White Paper, Publish/Disseminate												
Present Findings							<i>AKLA conference Sitka</i>				<i>Present at ALA Chicago</i>	



## Digital Products Plan

Our planning grant will produce the following types of digital products.

1. **Documentation of grant work** including project team meeting notes, partner letters of support, working budget, grant reports.
  - Type: These will be in the form of Word, PDF, Excel and or Google Docs/Sheets and archived in a project folder labeled IMLS Planning Grant on Google Drive.
  - Availability/Access: These documents will primarily be internally focused so will be available to the grants team and to IMLS. Where appropriate/possible, documents will be made available to the public with a Creative Commons license (CC-BY) applied to project outputs. Materials will be accessible to anyone with the IMLS Planning Grant link (Google Drive) or upon email request.
  - Sustainability: Accessible indefinitely (Google Drive) and backed up on a local departmental fileshare.
  
2. **Webpage** related to IMLS Planning Grant Project
  - Type: A project webpage on the Egan Library website to include project announcements, updates, links to surveys and project deliverables. The webpage will be hosted by UAS (which is backed up) and built using HTML, CSS, Javascript using the Cascade CMS.
  - Availability/Access: These resources will be freely available online without restriction. Where appropriate/possible, an open license (CC-BY) will be applied to project outputs.
  - Sustainability: Available on the Egan Library website (hosted by UAS) during the planning project then transitioned to a LibGuide (hosted by Springshare) with other information shared via the UAS Academic Catalog (hosted by UAS).
  
3. **Environmental Scan Materials** related to IMLS Planning Grant Project
  - Type: Documents, relevant statistics, lists of relevant/comparable academic and/or professional development programs. Materials will be documents primarily in Word, PDF or Google Docs formats. Web resources will be compiled into a resource list document. Materials will be archived in a project folder labeled IMLS Planning Grant on Google Drive.
  - Availability/Access: These documents will primarily be internally focused so will be available to the grants team and to IMLS. Where appropriate/possible, documents will be made available to the public with an open license (CC-BY) applied to project outputs. Materials will be accessible to anyone with the IMLS Planning Grant link (Google Drive) or upon email request.
  - Sustainability: Accessible indefinitely (Google Drive) and backed up on a local departmental fileshare.
  
4. **Survey Instruments and Data**
  - Type: University IRB documentation, Survey questions, focus group/interview prompts, focus group/interview response transcripts, survey response data. These materials will likely include documents in Word, PDF and/or Google Docs, spreadsheets in Excel and/or Google Sheets and archived in a project folder labeled IMLS Planning Grant on Google Drive.
  - Availability/access: These documents will primarily be internally focused so will be available to the grants team and to IMLS. Access to any sensitive data will be limited to the project team. Any personally identifiable data will be anonymized or redacted prior to sharing with a broader audience. Where appropriate/possible, documents will be made available to the public with an open license (CC-BY) applied to project outputs. Materials will be accessible to anyone with the IMLS Planning Grant link (Google Drive) or upon email request to jdbrown@alaska.edu.

- Sustainability: Accessible indefinitely (Google Drive) and backed up on a local departmental fileshare.

**5. White Paper or Case Study** containing an executive summary and highlights of findings from environmental scan of library workforce training needs and resulting recommendations.

- Type: Document/report in PDF and/or Google Docs.
- Availability: Publicly available online with an open license (CC-BY) to encourage broad dissemination and reuse. Authors may seek publication in appropriate academic journals.
- Access: Posted to project website, to the University's Institutional Repository (ScholarWorks@UA) and distributed via relevant professional association listservs.
- Sustainability: Accessible indefinitely (Google Drive, ScholarWorks@UA) and backed up locally.

**6. Promotional Materials**

- Type: Email templates, project announcements, media releases, survey invitations, survey flyers, course flyers, focus group invitation correspondence, conference proposals, etc. Materials will include documents in Word, PDF and/or Google Docs, spreadsheets in Excel and/or Google Sheets and archived in a project folder labeled IMLS Planning Grant on Google Drive.
- Availability/access: Publicly available online with an open license (CC-BY) to encourage broad dissemination, remix and reuse. Accessible to anyone with the IMLS Planning Grant link (Google Drive), linked from the project webpage or upon email request to jdbrown@alaska.edu.
- Sustainability: Accessible indefinitely (Google Drive) and backed up locally. .

**7. Presentation Materials**

- Type: Slide decks, speaker notes, conference proposals/descriptions. To include documents in Powerpoint, Word, PDF and/or Google Docs/Slides and archived in a project folder labeled IMLS Planning Grant on Google Drive.
- Availability: Publicly available online with an open license (CC-BY) to encourage broad dissemination, remix and reuse.
- Access: These resources will be accessible to anyone with the IMLS Planning Grant link (Google Drive), linked from the project webpage or upon email request to jdbrown@alaska.edu.
- Sustainability: Accessible indefinitely (Google Drive, ScholarWorks@UA) and backed up locally.

**8. Curriculum / Course Materials**

- Type: Program and course outlines, teaching guides, readings, assignments, program, course proposals, student course evaluations, and course shells. To include documents in Powerpoint, Word, PDF and/or Google Docs/Slides and archived in a project folder labeled IMLS Planning Grant on Google Drive.
- Availability/access: These documents will primarily be internally focused during curricular development and saved/backed up locally on departmental server. In the future we hope to make curricular materials publicly available online with an open license (CC-BY) to encourage broad dissemination, remix and reuse..
- Sustainability: Accessible indefinitely via departmental server and the UAS Curriculum Management System (CourseLeaf).