

Toward Gigabit Libraries for Native American Libraries

Introduction

The University Corporation for Advanced Internet Development (UCAID), doing business as Internet2, requests \$249,969 for a project entitled “**Toward Gigabit Libraries for Native American Libraries,**” which will build on two IMLS-funded projects: the Toward Gigabit Libraries Toolkit and Broadband Action Plan (RE-00-15-0110-15) and the “Gigabit Libraries and Beyond” (RE-246219-OLS-20) to empower tribal library practitioners to become more informed consumers, advocates, and providers of Internet access and digital services to their communities. This project aligns with Goal 3 and objectives 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 of the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program. The project will include Carson Block Consulting as a partner.

Project Justification

Native American libraries that lack the technical skills to assess, maintain, and upgrade their technology and internet connections risk being left behind by the digital age. The digital divide has widened for the nearly 10 million people throughout 574 federally recognized Indian/Alaskan Native nations, as well as Native Hawaiian communities.¹ Without access to skilled technical staff and knowledge of best practices, many of these libraries are unable to maximize the effectiveness of their connectivity, which can have a major negative impact on the communities they serve.

Project Work Plan

The purpose of this project is to further leverage IMLS investment in enhancing the training and professional development of the library and archival workforce to meet the needs of their communities scaling the successful “Toward Gigabit Libraries” (TGL) and the “Gigabit Libraries and Beyond” (GLB) programs to reach significantly more Native American libraries and improve the well-being of their communities.

The project will be planned, implemented, and managed in the same structure as the TGL and Gigabit Libraries and Beyond (GLB) projects, both of which involved a partnership team between Internet2 and Carson Block Consulting. A new element will be using an online project management tool (Monday.com) to automate the process of tracking, monitoring, and reporting monthly progress. Quarterly project reports will be generated and reviewed by the team to assist in task management and course corrections and will serve as the basis for reports to an advisory board for the project and annual reports to IMLS. Advisory Board meetings will be increased to 2x/year to encourage active support and leverage connections with tribal communities.

High-level project activities (in sequence) will focus on action-oriented activities in the field:

- **Form an active Advisory Board** that reflects the diversity of tribal nations and native communities within the US.
- **Refine the purpose of the Advisory Board to discuss key issues that reflect diverse tribal technology needs.** With 574 federally recognized Indian/Alaskan Native nations, as well as Native Hawaiian communities, issues and approaches should recognize and incorporate the nuance of local needs (including emerging regional and community networks) as well as emerging needs (including data sovereignty and others).
- **Pursue opportunities to provide the toolkit as a resource to tribes as part of upcoming broadband equity plans.** During the GLB project, the Hawai’i Broadband Initiative at the State of Hawai’i, Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism chose to integrate the toolkit as a key part of its digital equity plan for the state. We will leverage Internet2 and its connections with state and regional R&E networks, many of which are active participants in their state digital equity planning process, to offer the toolkit as a resource to states.
- **Perform additional in-person toolkit visits** to help diagnose technology challenges and identify solutions for individual libraries. Add a new element that helps connect tribal libraries to any possible funding resources, including (but not limited to) Erate.
- **Perform additional outreach** via webinars and conference presentations.
- **Create a new hands-on training module** that walks laypeople through the process of building and diagnosing a simple digital network in a fun, interactive and supportive training environment.
- **Perform the new in-person, hands-on training workshops regionally throughout the US,** to build on the power of in-person connections and learning. Target: Eight regional trainings (six in the lower 48 US, one in

¹ <https://ncoa.org/article/american-indians-and-alaska-natives-key-demographics-and-characteristics>

Alaska, and one in Hawaii. Our most successful GLB site visits occurred in Hawaii, where we were able to make important connections with local communities and organizations once we were physically there.

- **Provide travel support for in-person, hands-on training workshop attendees.** In the GLB project, cost was often a big barrier for potential in-person workshop attendees. Some state librarians stated they could not have attended without help covering their attendance. Providing financial assistance will enable Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native, and tribal library representatives to attend the training workshops where they otherwise could not.
- **Pursue and support language translation of the toolkit into native languages.** During site visits for the GLB project, the Hawai'i Broadband Initiative at the State of Hawai'i, Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism expressed interest in translating the toolkit into the Native Hawaiian language through a possible partnership with the University of Hawaii - Hilo to support young people raised as Native Hawaiian speakers and introduce them to technology concepts that could lead to career choices. There may be other, similar opportunities to explore in other native and tribal communities.
- **Perform very minor updates to the toolkit** as required by changes in technology specifications or other listed resources. Due to the overhaul and expansion of the toolkit during the GLB project, resulting in Toolkit 2.0, only very minor attention will be needed.

Diversity Plan

This project will focus on underserved Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian populations in terms of library services and broadband, many of which have limited technical resources available to support any library broadband or digital initiatives. Many of these are in lower-income, impoverished communities, where a library's digital services may be the only available broadband to community members. This project will support and promote tribal and native librarians' understanding of their broadband infrastructures to ensure they are optimized to meet community needs. The project team recognizes the sensitive nature of working with sovereign tribal nations and will involve key organizations and figures including expanding current affiliations with ATALM, State Library Organizations and other State-Level Agencies (such as broadband offices), serving tribes, and the Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association; and expanding membership to include the tribal office of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA); the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to support new tribal eligibility for Erate funding; the National Tribal Telecommunications Association (NTTA) and others who share an interest in improving broadband performance in tribal lands and connecting libraries to funding sources for telecommunications improvements.

Project Results

The design of this project is focused on broad impacts based on active engagement, including engagement of advisors (via the Advisory Board) with a deep reach into native and tribal communities and of in-person activities that result in tangible outcomes (improvements to tribal library technology, connections to Erate funding, and possible expansion into native language translation). As with the TGL and GLB projects, all materials will be freely available for non-commercial use, reuse, and remix use under a Creative Commons Share-Alike license.

In-person work is essential to the success of tribal technology outreach. Public health conditions during the pandemic limited the field work for the GLB project to a (roughly) 7-month period, which included an in-person conference presentation, partnership with ATALM to increase the number of tribal site visits, and dynamic opportunities that emerged during site work. Examples include a toolkit visit to the Navajo Nation Library in Window Rock AZ that resulted in a post-grant opportunity for hands-on network training for an estimated 40-50 new tribal libraries in chapter houses across the nation; and a visit to Hawaii that resulted in opportunities to support a future partnership with University of Hawaii-Hilo to translate the toolkit to the Hawaiian language to teach young people raised as Native Hawaiian speakers and introduce them to technology concepts that increase digital readiness and open up new career opportunities. This grant will endeavor to create environments, situations and engagements that encourage similar impacts.

Budget Summary

This proposal requests \$249,969 in IMLS funding over a 24-month project period. This funding will support site visit travel to rural and tribal libraries for toolkit deployment and training, regional workshops to offer in-person training, dissemination of findings at regional and national conferences, and community outreach. (1) *Salaries and Wages*: \$38,500 (2) *Fringe Benefits*: \$11,500 (3) *Travel*: \$34,200 (4) *Supplies, Materials, and Equipment*: \$10,900 (no Equipment requested) (5) *Subawards and Contracts*: \$64,000 (6) *Student Support*: \$0 (7) *Other Costs*: \$35,502 (8) *Indirect Costs*: \$55,367.