

Uniting Montana's Libraries

Introduction

The Treasure State Academic Information & Library Services (TRAILS) consortium, in partnership with the Montana State Library (MSL), seeks \$50,000 in funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services through its Planning Grant program under the Community Anchor project category. This partnership will explore innovative ways in which state libraries, academic libraries, and public libraries can share resources and develop services to their communities that will keep libraries relevant and fiscally sound in the 21st century.

Describe the National Need Your Project Will Address

Libraries across the nation have been challenged in recent years with shrinking budgets and rising costs. The fiscal situation has recently become more serious in states like Montana, where resource extraction industries have historically fed state coffers. Declines in those industries have resulted in less tax revenue. Education, social services, and cultural organizations have been hit hardest, and many states have reduced funding to state libraries. In the past year alone, state library funding has decreased by 16.5% in Montana and many other states (Ohio, New York, Montana, Delaware, and Mississippi) have also suffered severe financial cuts.

At the same time the need for library services is more critical than ever. For example, rapid advances in artificial intelligence are changing the employment paradigm, threatening jobs performed by humans and creating an acute need for educational and social services. Never before has the need been more apparent for open access to information to inform policy making as society faces a monumental shift of our economy that may ultimately disenfranchise many if we do not prepare. Libraries of all types must learn to work together to address budget shortfalls, prepare for automation threats, and provide seamless access to information sources and lifelong learning opportunities for every citizen of the state.

Proposed Workplan Outline

- Convene stakeholders to conduct discussions, environmental scans, or surveys that will identify local and statewide concerns for which possible services and training resources can be created.
- Explore strategies for MSL, public libraries, TRAILS, academic libraries, and school libraries to partner with development groups, government organizations, and others to create a strong, integrated, infrastructure that supports lifelong learning through shared resources or training. Populations of special interest may include: the underserved communities of displaced workers, rural inhabitants, tribal groups, veterans, and the disabled.
- Seek practical collaborations that will yield real life improvements for users and citizens, such as improved and lifelong access to greater e-resources, a statewide technological backbone for libraries and their patrons, or the retraining of workers with locally, applicable skills for workers displaced due to technology or declining industries.
- Leverage partner strengths—e.g., academic knowledge and expertise, the accessibility and established trust of public libraries, and MSL's broad reach to form a viable and sustainable support structure that can offer services and resources that will engage communities and improve the lives of individuals.

Possible Models to Investigate:

1. **Shared Services:** Resources – human and electronic; Technology – integrated public and academic library system; Services – training [internal and external] and fiscal management.
2. **"New Collar" Workers Retraining:** Develop a system of partners that facilitates accessible, flexible, and affordable resources and training to empower peoples' daily lives and economic well-being.

3. Systematic Information Literacy:

Create a true, lifelong training program that provides instruction on information bias, hidden algorithms, and consumer awareness that utilizes learning venues in K-12, higher education, and adult learning.

Demonstrate Your Project's Relevance to the Project Category

This project aligns with the IMLS Community Anchor project category; it will investigate a possible framework in which state, academic, and local libraries can form and leverage strategic partnerships with a wide-array of community stakeholders to address the widespread, institutional challenges due to state tax revenue volatility. The practices developed under this framework will be easily adoptable, affordable, sustainable, and widely implementable.

Articulate the Potential Impact and Projected Outcomes

- With a statewide infrastructure of shared services that is built on innovative technology and practices, local libraries of all types will find efficiencies and free up resources that will allow them to focus on the local needs in their communities.
- Lifelong learning could be better coordinated, more consistent, and an officially recognized tenet that may be readily incorporated by multiple agencies and programs.
- Through more integrated and streamlined services, libraries can be better positioned to prove their value and sustain their work in the event of possible budget reductions or withdrawal of financial support.
- Partner relationships, discussions, and survey data can allow for access to a greater variety of resources, while at the same time, there may be the development of more targeted, regional service, and the creation of relevant, localized retraining.
- Literacy programs, having been better integrated and continuous, can enable students and citizens to more readily gain lifelong skills that make them more sophisticated consumers of information.
- The future of scalable infrastructure is one that could expand regionally and nationally, helping each community in the U.S. find their own unique solutions to our futures challenges.

Budget Summary

Cost Category:	Item:	Direct Costs	Cost-Share:
1. Salary Support:	TRAILS Coordinator Salary Support		\$ 5,722.00
2. Fringe Benefits:	MSU Faculty Employee Benefit Rate of 37%		\$ 2,117.00
3. Travel:	Conference Travel to Disseminate Developed Framework	\$ 3,000.00	
	Consultant Travel Costs	\$ 5,000.00	
4. Contracted Services:	Facilitator/Project Consultant	\$ 20,000.00	
5. Participant Support:	Stakeholder Meeting Costs	\$ 12,340.00	
Total Direct Costs:	Total of Items 1-5	\$ 40,340.00	
Indirect Costs:	Facilities and Administrative Costs at MSU's Negotiated Rate of 34.5%	\$ 9,660.00	
Total Direct Costs:	Total Direct Costs + Total Indirect Costs		\$50,000.00
Total Cost-Share:	Total of Cost-Share/In-Kind Contribution		\$ 7,839.00
Total Project Costs:	Total Direct Costs + Total Cost-Share		\$ 57,839.00