

When library workers better understand and engage with their communities, libraries become stronger, more connected institutions and librarians become more effective advocates for patrons and libraries. However, library workers serving small/rural communities often face unique barriers to developing community engagement skills. **The ALA Public Programs Office, manager of the [Libraries Transforming Communities \(LTC\)](#) initiative, requests \$249,506 in IMLS Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian funding to address the community engagement needs of library workers serving small/rural communities.** This one-year project will complement the existing suite of LTC resources with a focus on basic facilitation skills training specific to the needs of small/rural libraries. The project aligns with the IMLS goal of building capacity for library workers to improve the well-being of their communities by equipping them with the skills necessary to listen to and lead conversations on important local and national issues.

### **Statement of Need**

ALA is committed to sustaining community engagement work in the field. Over the past four years of LTC, ALA has developed, evaluated and assembled a robust array of professional development materials fostering this work in libraries. More than [2,334 U.S. library workers](#) have participated in LTC's online and in-person trainings. Through ongoing evaluation, several needs have been identified in the field, including learning opportunities suited to the needs of small/rural libraries; support at the different stages of learning (beginner, intermediate, advanced); stronger MLIS instruction; and more diffuse training opportunities nationally.

ALA is moving forward to broadly address these gaps through LTC's overall initiative plan, including MLIS textbook development, train-the-trainer opportunities, free webinars, a continued collaboration with the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD), and an annual lab co-sponsored with the Harwood Institute. Response to the *LTC: Models for Change* series for libraries serving small, mid-sized and/or rural communities (40 applications for 25 scholarships, 50 in-person workshop attendees and 1,212 online learning participants) affirmed the anticipated interest in and need for skills training for small/rural libraries. Participating small/rural librarians expressed the need for opportunities that alleviate their professional (and often geographic) isolation, access to no-cost training and on-demand online learning sessions. This proposed project will enable ALA to focus *specifically* on addressing these needs for small/rural library workers by providing basic skills training and resources that consider the unique challenges they face (e.g. staffing shortages, isolation, travel barriers, etc.), creating an accessible pathway for them to existing LTC resources.

In alignment with the IMLS Laura Bush Program community catalysts category, this project will (1) build the capacity of small/rural library workers to contribute to the well-being of their communities, (2) enhance existing LTC training to provide foundational facilitation skills to strengthen library professionals' ability to build civic and cultural engagement opportunities in their communities, and (3) decrease social isolation by helping library workers bring together disparate voices in their communities to discuss important issues.

### **Project Design**

One Year: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020, ALA proposes the following activities:

*Project Advisory Group:* ALA efforts will be guided by a group of 10 community engagement leaders within and outside the library field with experience serving small/rural communities by issuing a call for applications. Representatives from the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) and the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) will make recommendations for the advisory group based on the applications received. To ensure that small/rural libraries voices are heard and valued, these advisors will serve as a steering group, leveraging feedback from their networks, providing input and direction on all deliverables. (Q1)

Program at 2019 ARSL Conference (approx. 600 attendees): ALA and NCDD will host an introductory level program that will lead attendees through community mapping and question crafting activities for community conversations and introduce them to available LTC resources. (Q2 – Q4)

Facilitation Guide: ALA, NCDD project staff and the project advisory group will create an introductory facilitation guide featuring tips and best practices specifically for small/rural librarians. ALA will publish the guide and launch a robust communications effort — utilizing print and e-marketing to both ALA members and purchased lists of non-member small/rural library workers; targeted outreach via ARSL, COSLA and state/regional library associations; social media; electronic mailing lists; and other methods — to promote the resource. (Q2 – Q4)

Online Learning: ALA will release five free online learning sessions that complement the facilitation guide. The online learning will provide participants with a deeper look at the material in an interactive virtual classroom setting. The recorded sessions will be made available on-demand. (Q3 – Q4)

Coaching Sessions: Monthly sessions will be led by advanced library practitioners and NCDD instructors. Hosted on Zoom, participants will connect with peers and receive guidance on specific topics (e.g. working with civic leaders, identifying partners) as they develop and implement their facilitation skills. (Q3 – Q4)

In-Person Workshop: This free, one-day beginner’s facilitation workshop, led by an experienced librarian facilitator and an NCDD member trainer, will address challenges facing small/rural libraries and provide practice facilitating. We will offer 50 scholarships of \$800 to mitigate costs for small/rural libraries. (Q3)

Evaluation: ALA will continue to work with New Knowledge Organization (NKO) to implement an evaluation using existing evaluation tools developed for the *LTC: Models for Change* initiative. These tools measure skills acquisition, attitudinal and behavioral changes in participants, and quality of instruction. (Q1– Q4)

## **Performance Goals and Outcomes**

1. Provide relevant and accessible opportunities for library professionals serving small/rural communities to build critical facilitation skills that they will use to foster community change
2. Communicate opportunities and outcomes to the field to strengthen and spread community engagement
3. Foster a network of library leaders committed to helping peers who are new to community engagement

## **National Impact**

The key outcomes of this project will be a suite of facilitation tools and trainings tailored to small/rural libraries, and a burgeoning network of small/rural library workers committed to community engagement. This project will lay the groundwork for richer, deeper and more actionable community engagement needs.

## **Budget Summary**

The overall one-year project budget is \$269,456. ALA requests **\$249,506 in grant funding** and will provide \$19,950 in cost share. Grant budget includes \$53,200 in salary/fringe for grant-funded staff; \$3,000 in travel and stipend; \$9,000 in meeting expenses; \$40,000 in scholarship stipends to small/rural library staff; \$12,000 in materials, marketing, communications and digital delivery (web, Adobe classroom); \$65,000 for curriculum design (\$20,000), content co-creation and instruction and coaching fees (\$45,000 NCDD); \$7,000 workshop instructors; \$25,000 for evaluation; \$600 in supplies; and \$34,706 in indirect cost at ALA existing federal rate of 22.42 percent.