

Project Narrative

Asotin County Library

Project Justification

The Asotin County Library Open Data Project will leverage existing partnerships among community entities to select the most useful and in demand datasets, clean and format the data and publish it as open data to a community portal hosted by data.wa.gov. In addition, we will offer Open Data classes for the public several times over the course of the grant period to help people be informed users of the data.

The Asotin County Open Data Project will address the need for the residents of Asotin County, Washington to have access to open data from Asotin County government departments and taxing districts, the cities of Clarkston and Asotin, Washington, and economic development entities in our area. This need was identified by Asotin County librarians who participated in the Knight Foundation's Data Equity for Main Street grant. The grant project produced a train-the-trainer curriculum and a curriculum for librarians to teach open data concepts and usage to the public. When preparing for and presenting the class, it became obvious that much of the information that people were looking for and found relevant from local sources was not available, either in pdf or open data formats.

We have reviewed best practices from several sources and found that, while there is quite a bit of overlap, each has its own strengths. Therefore, we would review best practices from multiple sources, particularly the Sunlight Foundation, The Open Data Guide and Socrata.

Asotin County Library serves a population of 22,700 people and has a staff of 7 full-time and 13 part-time employees. Our 2019 operating budget is \$954,000, \$869,000 of which comes from local property taxes. We are designated as a rural taxing district.

The benefits of the project are two-fold. It will benefit the government entities providing the datasets by making their information available to the public. In a meeting with local government participants where we were inviting them to be part of the project, they indicated that they had problems with the public's understanding of government, as indicated by time-consuming public records requests. Upon completion of the project, each time a person uses the newly published, library-managed datasets, the need for a public records request will be alleviated. (On average, the Washington State Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee indicates that each public records request to a county takes 3.6 hours of staff time to answer; cities are a bit less at 3.3). It will also help local governments to standardize and streamline data collection within their entities, making future data collection simpler.

More importantly, the people of Asotin County will benefit from this project. There will be improved transparency and accountability from local government. They will have single-source access to the data from anywhere that they have internet access, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. We expect people needing information for purchasing property, moving to our communities, developing business plans, planning construction projects, and many other activities will benefit from access to the data.

The library has gathered a group of leaders from government agencies and private and/or non-profit organizations in Asotin County and the cities of Clarkston and Asotin who have agreed to participate in publishing their data in an open data format. These include the Clarkston Police

Chief, School Superintendents, Mayors, Fire Chiefs, Clarkston Public Works Director, Clarkston Records/Finance, County Commissioner, County IT Director, County Finance Director, County Planner, Sheriff, and representatives from the County Health Department, SEWEDA (Southeastern Washington Economic Development), Port of Clarkston, Asotin County PUD, Lewis-Clark Valley Chamber Commerce, and Valley Vision. We will be working with them through conversations and a data inventory to identify the most commonly requested, high interest datasets. We plan to be very selective throughout the process as best practices encourage fewer, high quality datasets rather than a bigger number – quality over quantity.

We plan to do community surveys and focus groups to further identify what it is that the public wants to see most readily available to them. Librarians will do the bulk of this work, while we will use student interns to help with the formatting and cleaning of the data.

We will also continue to offer the Open Data classes developed as part of the Data Equity for Main Street grant. We believe that, as we teach people about open data, they will be better able to express their needs and interests, thereby helping us to select the most relevant datasets.

Our selected project category is Data Inclusion (enabling community engagement through civic data and civic technology). It will include the following activity: Supporting emergency preparedness and community resiliency through communication infrastructures. It will address two of the three Agency-Level Goals, specifically Building Capacity and Increasing Public Access.

Project Work Plan

We plan to promote the project throughout the two year grant period on Facebook, Twitter and our website. In addition, at specific times, such as the signup period for classes and recruitment for focus groups, we will advertise in the local newspaper, radio and television. We will create a brochure about the open data collection, making it available to the public at the library, and providing copies to select people such as project partners, realtors, and educational institutions.

To aid in selection of datasets for publication, we will hold focus groups. We will recruit members of the community to participate, develop questions to be discussed, gather the group together to give input and synthesize the results. We will discuss the results of the focus groups with project partners with the goal of meeting the needs defined by the groups.

We will distribute a [data inventory form](http://bit.ly/2E8kINL) (<http://bit.ly/2E8kINL>) to project partners to help in identifying data available, quality of data, format and storage of data, who uses it, how long it takes to access it, etc. Once we have synthesized the focus group information and reviewed the data inventories, we will hold follow-up conversations with project partners to finalize data selection.

We will hire student interns to format and clean the data. Interns will be hired from the University of Washington Open Data Project or the Lewis-Clark State College Geographic Information Science Program. Each of these programs has students with the necessary expertise to ready the data for publication. Consultants from these two programs, Bree Norlander and Jenni Light respectively, will oversee student progress. Once the data is ready, it will be sent to Will Saunders at the Office of the Chief Information Officer for the State of Washington to be

published on data.wa.gov, the State of Washington’s open data portal. Will Saunders and Kathleen Sullivan from the Washington State Library will be acting as consultants throughout the project.

We will repeat the process from year one in year two. We feel that it will be more manageable to go through the process in smaller steps. As we evaluate year one, we can make any necessary changes for year two. By the time we have gone through the whole process twice, we believe we will be able to continue on our own accord.

Activities

YEAR 1			
Promotion – Twitter, Facebook, Website	September 1, 2019	August 31, 2020	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Select Focus Groups	September 1, 2019	October 31, 2019	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Data Inventories	September 1, 2019	November 30, 2019	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby Partnering Entities
Hold Focus Groups	October 1, 2019	November 30, 2019	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Quarterly Report – if required	December 1, 2019	December 31, 2019	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Follow-up Data Selection Interviews with Entities	December 1, 2019	February 29, 2020	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby Partnering Entities
Promote Classes	December 1, 2019	December 31, 2019	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Hold Classes	January 1, 2020	January 31, 2020	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Quarterly Report – if required	March 1, 2020	March 31, 2020	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Finalization of Data Selection	March 1, 2020	April 30, 2020	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby Partnering Entities
Formatting & Cleaning of Data	April 1, 2020	July 31, 2020	Student Intern Jenni Light
Quarterly Report – if required	June 1, 2020	June 30, 2020	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Publishing Data	July 1, 2020	September 30, 2020	Student Intern Will Saunders
Annual Report	September 1, 2020	September 30, 2020	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby

YEAR 2			
Promotion – Twitter, Facebook, Website	September 1, 2020	August 31, 2021	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Data Inventories	September 1, 2020	November 30, 2020	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby Partnering Entities
Quarterly Report – if required	December 1, 2020	December 31, 2020	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Follow-up Data Selection Interviews with Entities	December 1, 2020	February 29, 2021	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby Partnering Entities
Promote Classes	December 1, 2020	December 31, 2020	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Hold Classes	January 1, 2021	January 31, 2021	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Quarterly Report – if required	March 1, 2021	March 31, 2021	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Finalization of Data Selection	March 1, 2021	April 30, 2021	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby Partnering Entities
Formatting & Cleaning of Data	April 1, 2021	July 31, 2021	Student Intern Jenni Light
Quarterly Report – if required	June 1, 2021	June 30, 2021	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby
Publishing Data	July 1, 2021	September 30, 2021	Student Intern Will Saunders
Final Report	September 1, 2021	September 30, 2021	Mary Neuman Jennifer Ashby

People involved in the project include Mary Neuman, MLIS, Project Director and Jennifer Ashby, MLS, professional librarians who have spent the last two years working on the Data Equity for Main Street Project.

Consultants on the project include:

- Will Saunders, JD, Open Data Guy (that's his real title) for the Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Washington. Will was the Co-Director of the Data Equity for Main Street Project.
- Kathleen Sullivan, MLIS, Open Data Literacy Consultant at Washington State Library.
- Bree Norlander, MLIS, Research Coordinator at the University of Washington iSchool, specializing in Data Science and Data Curation.
- Jenni Light, PhD, Professor of Engineering at Lewis-Clark State College, teaching Engineering, Physics, GIS and Earth Systems.

We will need staff time for Project Director Mary Neuman (450 hours) and Jennifer Ashby (360 hours) to work on the project.

We will need one student intern per semester for 160 hours for each of four semesters.

We will need to purchase a laptop and pay for design and printing of a brochure promoting the project.

Risks to the project include:

1. Loss of interest by project partners. We will mitigate this by communicating closely with partners at all stages of the project, letting them know that the project is moving ahead and helping them to understand the benefits, including sharing statistics on usage. They are currently interested and on board, so good communication will keep them engaged.
2. Lack of resources of project partners. We will mitigate this by providing the help of the student intern(s) to collect and cull out the data. We will also be very careful to work around times of year that are busiest for the entities so as not to increase their workload at a difficult time.

We will measure our progress as follows:

- Counting the number of datasets successfully published
- Counting the number of partners submitting datasets
- Number of classes held
- Attendance at classes
- Number of uses of our open data portal

We will survey attendees at the beginning and end for the 3-day Open Data Class. We will evaluate based on:

- Number of responses from class attendees
- Content of responses from class attendees

We will survey our project partners at the end of year one and again at the end of year two to ensure that they are benefitting as we predict they will. The survey at the end of year one will include questions about the process and how we might improve it. We will evaluate based on:

- Number of responses from partner entities
- Content of responses from partner entities
- Change in the number of public records requests

Project Outcomes

The intended results of our project are to:

- Successfully publish high quality datasets of local interest to our community in an attractive and easily accessible portal
- Increase efficiency of collection and publication of data
- Allow government agencies and private organizations to share data more easily
- Increase understanding and use of open data for the general public by offering Open

- Data classes and developing a brochure to promote use of the open data portal
- Minimize public records requests to participating agencies by making the data easily available as open data

The outputs of our project will be the datasets, the Open Data classes and the brochure.

We will know that our project is successful if we have published a number of quality datasets, seen healthy usage numbers for our portal and received survey information indicating that:

- People understand and use open data more easily
- Our partners have increased efficiency of data collection and publication
- Public records requests have decreased
- Information is being shared more freely and easily among project partners

We feel that we will be able to maintain the project after the grant period because we will have learned the process, having gone through it twice, and have set up the framework to continue development of our portal. We have recently added a new professional librarian to our staff which has lightened the workload for both Mary Neuman and Jennifer Ashby, thus enabling sustainability of the project. In the event that we need to continue to use interns, we would be able to hire one per year out of our operating budget.

