Narrative

1. Statement of Need

Building off of Research and Community Impact: Utilizing research from [Stanford's Center for Social Innovation](#) around collective impact - which includes 1) common agenda, 2) shared measurement/technology platform, 3) mutually reinforcing activities, 4) continuous communication, and 5) local backbone support organization, the IVMF has cultivated an innovative community-based initiative called AmericaServes. In January 2015 and with generous funding from the Robin Hood Foundation, New York State Health Foundation, Schultz Family Foundation, and Accenture, IVMF established NYServes-NYC, the first AmericaServes network in the nation, serving NYC's five boroughs. Each local network is administered by a backbone organizations that coordinates referrals for services and resources among providers, and is supported by a technology platform that enables effective communication, real-time data tracking and performance analysis.

Addressing a Need to Serve the Veteran Community: In a survey of over 9,000 veterans and military families, IVMF identified the most pressing challenge facing veterans upon transition to be navigating the vast array of services, resources, and care. This is the same need that came out of our initial conversations at Buncombe Public Library in Western North Carolina and is the basis behind AmericaServes. AmericaServes expanded to the Western NC region and is building community buy-in amongst veterans and organizing in the following 11 counties: Buncombe, Henderson, Haywood, Rutherford, McDowell, Transylvania, Jackson, Polk, Yancey, Madison, and Mitchell. In Charlotte, Coastal NC, and Raleigh-Durham, NCServes has served over a thousand veterans and military families through a streamlined approach to the delivery of services, resources, and care. Each network is supported by a local competitively identified Coordination Center responsible for streamlining referrals among participating public and nonprofit providers and ensuring that clients are quickly and accurately connected to the services they need. NCServes Western, the newest community that we are looking to launch has received buy-in from the start from the Buncombe Public Libraries, as well as several community organizations, as indicated in our attached Letters of Support. IVMF hosted our first strategy session in January 2017, demonstrated our technology to interested parties in February 2017, and are spending April 2017 in organizing mode – how do we accurately reflect the service gaps and needs in a community and bring the counties together to generate change?

Our eventual goal is the following: bring NCServes – Western onto the platform similar to how we have operated with the other eight communities. Underpinning the operations of each network is a secure, robust technology platform, which records the interactions between the providers and each other, and the Coordination Center. The live data tracking, performance analysis and reporting, allows for an unprecedented level of transparency and first of its kind analytics being applied to the veteran and military space. One of these providers will be the Buncombe Library System (with their composite libraries), and more organizations – including service providers, veteran advocacy organizations, and nonprofits – have already expressed interested. Each organization will be trained and onboarded; one of our goals with the approach in this funding application is to increase the number of libraries in the area that are onboarded on our service coordination platform.

Why Libraries?: Although we have utilized and partnered with libraries in quite a few of our already established communities, this is an approach to centralize our efforts in a major AmericaServes community in which we have substantial reach. In addition, our approach largely stems as well from

analysis of two major IMLS Reports: "Community Catalyst" and "Museums, Libraries and Comprehensive Initiatives", as indicated in the figure below. By partnering with libraries in our NCServes - Western region and expanding our existing efforts to do so, the team will work to improve the breadth of our community impact as well as to ensure that we are strengthening service delivery in the region. Libraries are not utilized enough for their enormous potential in engaging and serving a local community, broadening community reach, and building local buy-in. Our approach has two prongs, shown in **Figure 1** below and explained further in the next section.
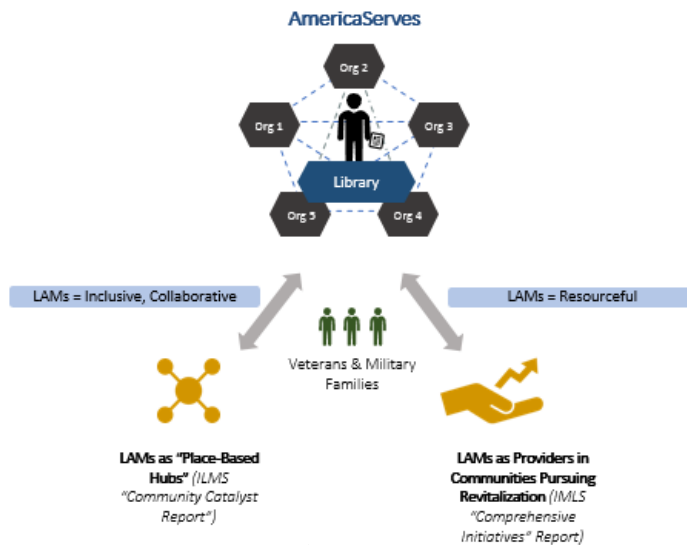

Figure 1

Introducing Our Dual-Pronged Approach To Empower Libraries and Veterans: IVMF's goal is to build, strengthen, and enhance current and future AmericaServes networks to support a national model that promotes coordination of services, resources and care across cities, counties and states, such that veterans, service members and their families find the support they need wherever they go. For IMLS funds, Syracuse University's IVMF intends to respond as a community entity and will build out the application using three components:

1. **Inclusive:** Our work to centralize community development and service coordination in our community's libraries – develop the library as a central focal point for community relations and discussions, as well as for learning
2. **Collaborative:** Utilization of our collective impact model to grow out community change – building out a symbiotic relationship with our community's libraries to focus and create that change
3. **Resourceful:** Driving more traffic to community centers and libraries in the community

Thus, IVMF is requesting **$150,000** in funding to be used towards the NCServes – Western network, focused on costs associated with provider engagement of libraries and other community development tasks. Our exact budget stipulations are identified later in this document as well as in the Budget Form/Justification. We will work to partner with Libraries in this region in two ways:

Approach 1: Libraries as Place-Based Hubs: To address the capacity of Libraries as "inclusive" and "collaborative" drivers of community development, we aim to place Libraries at their natural central point as the "hub" of our AmericaServes communities. **We will position libraries as a learning and connection hub, not solely a meeting/mobilization location.** At this stage, the NCServes – Western

region is still in the "strategy session" phase of network development. IVMF is holding our third strategy session in April, 2017 where we will work with providers to build a service coordination community from the inside out, answering the pivotal question from the region's military-connected community, "*what are service gaps that require filling?*" The strategy sessions thus far took place at Buncombe Public Libraries and corresponding organizations, where we saw immense buy-in for the hundreds of community providers that attended. Data and reporting are crucial to the continued growth of impact in this community and continued feedback and discussions with veterans on-the-ground is pivotal.

Community conversations hosted by libraries offer a unique view into the hearts and minds of the folks that we are working to serve. We saw this when we hosted a strategy session with local service providers and witnessed a 20 percent higher attendance rate than a traditional strategy session. Additionally, according to the [American Library Association (ALA),](#) libraries serve as "safe spaces". As AmericaServes looks to serve more military spouses, female veterans, and single mothers, this is a quality that we need to incorporate. Communities are able to unite to discuss central sociopolitical issues with full transparency, and this is a direct impact of the services that a library provides. **Figure 2** below demonstrates this proposed approach.

In this approach, the LAM is acting as a conduit and community convener. In the case of NCServes - Western, we are looking to positioning local public libraries as more of a focal point in the community for our upcoming community sessions and workshops. We are aiming to hold all of our upcoming workshops at the local library, as well as leveraging our Syracuse University Library expert SMEs as advisors in pulling in community members and organizing our service region given the major role that Syracuse University plays in the library world and across the community. We are looking to centralize the community more to leverage the critical role that libraries have in coordinating local discussions.
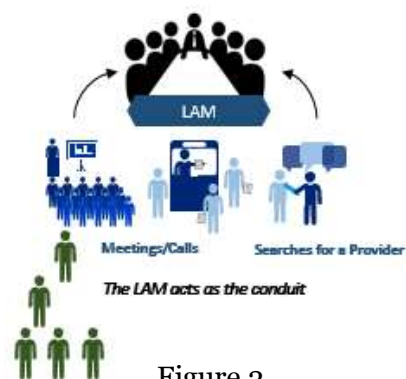

Figure 2

More importantly, though we aim to expand the role of libraries in this area, our aim is to work with libraries to serve as learning hubs. Beginning projects to map out the service coverage area to analyze if we can expand to neighborhood counties, working to review service categories and decide where there are (if any) gaps, and partnering to develop "community resources" are all pivotal goals in our overall Approach 1. This service mapping is pivotal – our team has done it before, but working with libraries to accurately map out what our service region should be and partner with us to identify gaps in service delivery in the region is so pivotal. Buncombe Public Library already expressed interest and the ability to do so, and we will work with our Library SMEs as well as our core team to spread this role to other libraries as well.

Approach 2: Libraries as Value-Add Providers: This second prong, which will occur simultaneously with our first approach "Libraries as Placed-Based Hubs", is equally important. To address the capacity of Libraries as "resourceful" organizations in actually providing services to marginalized populations, we have made it our mission to incorporate libraries in our provider network in the communities that we are currently looking to shape. We found when developing our network in Upstate NY (which is now launched and processing hundreds of veteran referrals) that involved community providers in the network are often libraries. One of our registered, onboarded, and trained providers in the area is the Rochester Public Library. The Library uses as a central tenant the notion that a library aids to bring services directly to the "non-traditional or under-served patron through programs and services. Whether

patrons are in their homes, senior housing, rehabilitation centers or county correctional facilities, [the Library] brings the library experience and resources to the community." In this case, the provider works with AmericaServes to bring library and education services directly to providers. We must work in this community to expand the role that Libraries play in our work across the counties in which we work in. In other cases, libraries and even museums act as mentorship service providers for minority populations, as well as vocational training and community support. At Syracuse University, where IVMF is based, libraries often act as <u>entrepreneurship support service providers</u>. **Figure 3** below demonstrates this proposed approach.

The left-hand image demonstrates a community pre-Serves intervention, and the right-hand image demonstrates a coordinated network, with the LAM at the center, after the Serves' collective impact and network development efforts. This is a dual-pronged project to bringing libraries further to the center of our community building initiatives in NCServes – Western, with a long-term plan to prove a functioning model that we can replicate in our other communities – both communities that are already live like in Pittsburgh, PA or communities that are still in the development phase like Washington, DC or in this case Western North Carolina. Veteran and military families' voices will be heard using our Unite Us technology platform as well as during our continual network in-person, library-based convenings. Centering libraries and allowing for Libraries to offer their inherent value in service provision is key to bringing communities to the next level. Importantly, our aim is to onboard libraries as providers to understand the platform and to begin to help us train on the platform. According to a Pew Internet Study on "<u>Libraries in the Digital Age</u>," 77% of Americans now think it is "very important" for public libraries to embrace digital. By onboarding providers onto the platform and training them on the platform's functionality, they can serve as "trainers" on the use of the technology to other community organizations. Lastly, libraries can add value by broadening our expertise on service provision gaps in the area. As we build this approach to partner, they can help us understand and identify gaps in services like financial literacy and then set the stage for AmericaServes providers like Goodwill, which also has a base in Buncombe County, to help address gaps.

Figure 3

2. Impact

The impact of our project is two-phased given the community need we are fulfilling and our commitment to libraries. Both "approaches" occur simultaneously.

Approach 1: **Table 1** demonstrates our goals and assigned stakeholders (discussed in the next section), associated metrics, and project impact. We use the table metrics to keep the team accountable and ultimately track progress and measure progress. A few tasks of our plan are below:

Upcoming Convenings and Community Involvement: In Western North Carolina, we have one upcoming Strategy Session (April, 2017), four upcoming In Progress Reviews (IPRs), and four upcoming Focus Group meetings that serve as a critical convening point for providers and advocacy organizations in the

region to unite, provide feedback on the platform, and discuss service gaps in the community. These meetings serve as a central focal point for cross-sector discussions in the community on our collective impact model.

Thought Leadership and "Voice of the Veteran": IVMF endeavors to demonstrate a sufficient return on investment within these networks to seed and sustain new forms of enhanced and trusted public-private partnerships between these communities and the federal government. To do so, we use thought leadership in the form of blogs, newsletters, and outreach. To ensure traction on our thought leadership and findings, we often partner with local community groups and our Coordination Centers to extend the message. Also, in our approach, we look to partner with local libraries to expand coverage, understand community service gaps, and perfect surveying to ensure we are extracting the right client feedback on the platform as well as service coordination. We are bringing on a Library SME, Natalie, who will be helping facilitate these surveys and service coverage efforts.

Communications: Our communications to the network are extremely strategic. We work with all stakeholders to send out continual communications via our mailing system, social media, and micro-blogging to inform the network on our progress, any issues that arise, and any upcoming IPRs, focus groups, and thought leadership.

Table 1

Performance Goal	Metric that M&E Team Uses to Measure Success	Project Impact
1. **NCServes (Matt – Community Lead)/M&E/Libraries:** Hold all upcoming In-Progress Reviews - IPRs (every 6 months) as well as Focus Groups (every other 6 months) at local libraries including: • Buncombe Public Libraries • Pack Memorial Library • Henderson County Public Library • Transylvania County Library	**Metric #1:** % of all upcoming IPRs and Focus Groups at Western NC Libraries • Benchmark: 100% **Metric #2:** % of counties in network in which we hold our upcoming Library sessions • Benchmark: 75%	**Result #1:** Increase in number of providers that onboard onto the platform every month due to the central nature that the library will begin to play in the network. Also, begin to position the library as a resource on community information and service programming.
2. **NCServes (Matt – Community Lead)/M&E/Libraries:** Hold two additional "Town Hall "events, organized by the Library staff, that will provide insights (in a town hall/community setting) to increase awareness of community resources and access points that may increase navigation assistance and successful transition	**Metric #1:** Number of "Town Hall" events held at local libraries • Benchmark: 2	**Result #2:** Position the library further as a resource on community information and service programming; work with the library to document and define access points in the community to bring onboard a wider base of providers.
3. **NCServes (Ilario – Senior Director)/Natalie (SME)/Regional Libraries:** Co-author 1-2 thought leadership pieces on service coordination and community development through discussion with local libraries and museums.	**Metric #1:** Number of thought leadership pieces created in partnership with libraries • Benchmark: 1-2 **Metric #2:** Read-rate, download rate, and share rate • Benchmark: All on average 35% amongst this community	**Result #3:** We have often sought partnerships to add value to our various thought leadership pieces, and we will work to leverage our partnerships with local Libraries to co-author reports. Our library SMEs will also offer support in this area.

4. **NCServes (Ilario – Senior Director):** Streamline communications to include local libraries as primary sponsors of our work, in partnership with the UniteUs, our technology partner.	**Metric #1:** % of communications sent out that include "in partnership with X Local Library" • Benchmark: 75% **Metric #2:** Number of veterans and military families reached in FY17-FY18 • Benchmark: 500 individuals	**Result #4:** This will ensure that the library remains to be – in public view as well – an instrumental stakeholder in the coordination of services in Western North Carolina as well as a comfortable party in bringing together community feedback about the network.
5. **Natalie (SME)/Regional Libraries:** Library offers "learn more about your community resources". Information that takes IVMF data on NCServes - Western such as service region demographics and service delivery spread and packages the information into digestible materials for end users.	**Metric #1:** Number of community resources created in partnership with libraries • Benchmark: 1-2 **Metric #2:** Number of follow-on correspondence from veterans • Benchmark: 10-15 follow-on meetings as a result of library materials **Metric #3:** Total amount of time per every data refresh to ensure that materials are up-to-date • Benchmark: Every 3 months **Metric #4:** Read-rate, download rate, and share rate • Benchmark: All on average 35% amongst this community	**Result #5:** Partnering with the local library on community resources creation and documentation will ensure that veterans and military spouses across counties in our service region will have access to this information. Libraries in the region can help add that "local spin", and work with IVMF to document data that would be especially useful to individuals in the region. Our Library SMEs will also offer support in this area.
6. **NCServes (Matt – Community Lead)/Regional Libraries:** Hold ongoing quarterly meetings with libraries in the area to facilitate landscape and provider review/mapping exercises in order to grow out our network, deepen our impact, and fill service gaps that have not been filled yet.	**Metric #1:** Number of Provider Review/Mapping meetings with local libraries • Benchmark: 4 **Metric #2:** Total amount of time between every meeting • Benchmark: Every 3 months **Metric #3:** Total amount of time per each service coverage refresh to ensure our region and service provider mapping are up-to-date • Benchmark: Every 3 months	**Result #6:** Empowering libraries ability to "understand" their community by bringing them a part of the decision table as to where to look for new providers and how to include counties that we may be missing in our service region. Our Library SMEs will help facilitate these conversations, and our team will run the meetings.

7. **NCServes (Matt – Community Lead)/Regional Library/M&E:** Work with library to perfect a client feedback survey to understand client feedback in a more close-to-community fashion.	**Metric #1:** Total amount of time until a new veteran feedback survey is launched and operationalized
	   • Benchmark: ≤ 6 months from project start
	
	Metric #2: Total amount of time between each send of feedback to Unite Us
	   • Benchmark: Every 1 month
	
	Metric #3: % of veterans in the network that complete and send back the service region
	   • Benchmark: 85%
		Result #7: Working with libraries to get to the core of veterans issues with the digital platform – service coordination, any technology issues they are having, and how much time the platform is saving them from manual referral tasks. The survey, which we plan to refresh continually, will offer that community feedback.

Approach 2: **Table 2** below demonstrates our goals and assigned resources (discussed in the next section), associated metrics, and project impact. We use the table metrics to keep the team accountable and ultimately track progress and measure progress. A few tasks of our plan are highlighted below.

Service Provider Onboarding: As we did with Rochester Public Library for NYServes – Upstate, our approach is to onboard additional library providers in our counties in NCServes – Western, as well as to ensure that those providers are engaged through referrals on the platform. The first step will be to register them as providers in the platform in one our fifteen service categories, which include employment services, mentorship and education support.

Digital Training: After we have onboarded these providers, we will push to "train the trainers." Libraries – often equipped with computer labs – are a prime place to serve as trainers to community organizations on the platform, with help from UniteUs and AmericaServes. Digital is at the center of libraries today, and after we train libraries on the platform, we will look to have them champion the provider registration process to help us onboard new providers in the region. We are bringing on a SME, Brian, who has led work in digital for collective impact before and understands how to explain technology to providers well and get them engaged.

Table 2

Task	Metric that M&E Team Uses to Measure Success	Project Impact

1. **Unite Us/NCServes (Matt – Community Lead)/Regional Libraries/Bryan (SME):** Onboard Library service providers in the NCServes - Western region to join our network	Metric #1: Number of libraries onboarded as providers in the region
	   • Benchmark: 5-6
	
	Metric #2: % of counties involved
	   • Benchmark: 75%
		Allowing for Libraries to offer their inherent value in service provision is key to bringing communities to the next level.

2. **Unite Us:** Train Library service providers in the NCServes - Western region to join our network. Train on the technology	Metric #1: Number of libraries trained as providers in the region on the platform • Benchmark: 5-6	Pushes forward the notion that libraries are in the network and are now experts in the platform.
3. **NCServes/Regional Libraries/Bryan (SME):** Work with libraries to promulgate provider registration - Also, there is a digital component here that needs some	Metric #1: Time between provider registration seminars held by libraries and AmericaServes • Benchmark: every three months	Underscores to the community the importance of the digital component, and certifies the libraries as community champions in bringing on board new providers.

thought. Folks that want to watch and learn more from their living room, or on a run after work, how do libraries begin to leverage technology?	Metric #2: # of providers registered in a critical two week window after the registration seminars • Benchmark: 5-6	Organizations will see a familiar face that is trained on the platform and will be more prone to join onto efforts.
4. **Unite Us:** Focus to increase Referrals after bringing libraries on board. Engaging these providers is crucial to actually making an impact on the community network.	Metric #1: % Overall Providers making Referrals after 6 months into the project • Benchmark: 30% Metric #2: % LAM Providers Making ≥ 2 Referrals • Benchmark: 85% Metric #3: Number of LAM Provider Referrals • Benchmark: 25 after 6 months into the project	Increased referral activity and spread

Monitoring & Evaluation of our Progress: At the heart of every IVMF AmericaServes Network, strong Measurement and Evaluation underpins the organization's approach to demonstrating both value and stewardship with our funder's resources. NCServes - Western is no exception. The AmericaServes M&E Team, with Point of Contact and team member Gilly Cantor, will employ robust measurement and evaluation methods that include continuous improvement and longitudinal analysis. Understanding that a shared measurement system is key for success of a collective impact initiative, IVMF leverages the Unite US care-coordination technology platform for collective case management and data collection. Our approach to measuring impact follows a tangible lifecycle: a) Define the intended impact and how that impact is achieved; b) Collect, measure, and verify data; c) Refine insights, identify achievements and improvements; d) Capitalize and report on achievements and agree on proposed approach for implementing improvements. We have budgeted in time to also coordinate with the IMLS third-party evaluator on this metric-setting and evaluating.

Summary of Project Results: Granular project results and impact are demonstrated above, but with our dual approach, we are looking on a macro-level to accomplish the following:
- Establish the library as a hub and learning center
- Allow libraries to provide services in areas where they may have value-add such as mentorship, skill-building, employment, education, and childcare
- Train the library on data-based, and digital service provision
- Scale and adapt this project to libraries in additional counties in Western North Carolina (to expand the service region as a result of community discussions and surveying in Approach 1 and Approach 2). Also, scale and adapt this project to libraries in other set-up communities such as NYServes – NYC and PAServes – Pittsburgh using this same replicable model of goals, metrics, and impact; as well as our technology platform which illustrates data and reporting, making scalability of approach easier across communities
- Scale and adapt this project to libraries in in-process communities (Washington DC) and currently live communities (Pittsburgh, New York, etc) using this same replicable model of goals, metrics and impact; as well as our technology platform which illustrates data and reporting, making scalability of approach easier across communities

3. *Project Design*

Goals and Risks: Our aim is to accomplish of our goal of centralizing Libraries as "place-based hubs" and "value-add providers" in the time-frame of October 2017 to November 2018. Our network is already in the midst of development, and these efforts will ensure that impact is deepened. The project team, illustrated in Figure 4 below, will use eight main stakeholders to administer this project, and use the platform as well as our planned convenings to leverage existing momentum and stakeholder networks in order to spark community discussion over veteran service provision and to increase our referral numbers in the region, especially amongst Libraries. We have identified that risks include obtaining that library buy-in across our community as well as initial hesitation by libraries to onboard on the platform. Our risk management solutions are engrained in our approach we have replicated the model time and time again in each community to ensure adequate buy-in through community convenings and perform clear demonstrations (both laid out in our plan) to limit any hesitation from organizations at the onset.
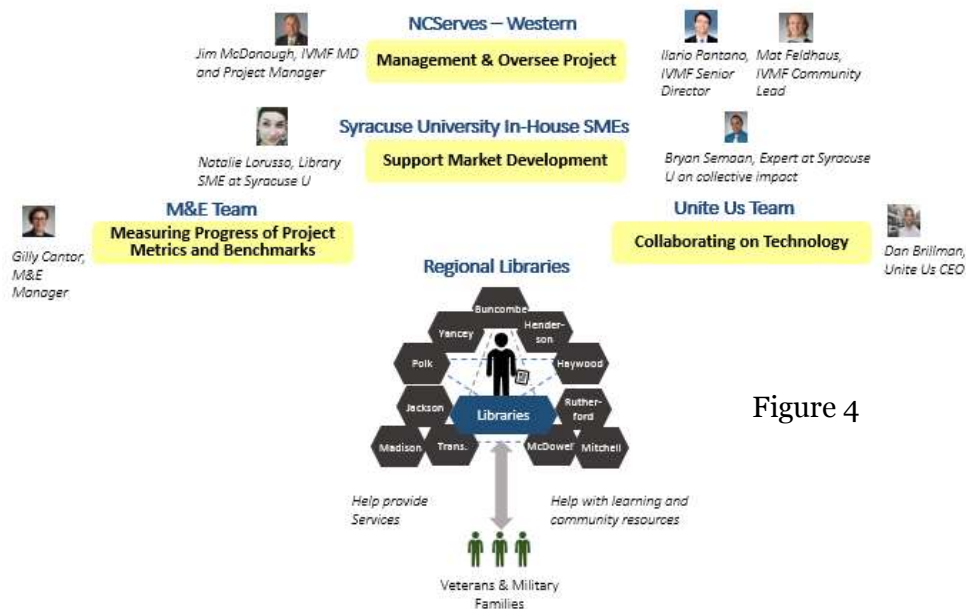

Figure 4

Mapping our Team to the Original Goal:

- The AmericaServes Community team, which acts as the overseer and administrator of "best practices". Activities include: coordinating convenings, aggregating community feedback through surveys, and helping to register and onboard providers
- The Unite US Team, which trains on the technology and leads registration/onboarding
- The M&E Team, who provides continual data inputs and works with the Libraries on documenting data out to the community
- Our Library Experts from our "mother" institution – Syracuse University, who will be able to support materials, service region mapping, and gaining initial buy-in from Western libraries
- Libraries in the region, including Buncombe Public Library, who will partner with the Serves team
- Veterans and Military Families – community members will play a large role in informing the community direction via regular surveying, as well as being active with providers in the region around discussions and referrals

Key Project Questions:
- How will we *successfully* work with libraries to develop learning hubs in these communities?

- Will libraries be successfully "bought-in" to the platform training and digital onboarding?
- When will we see our goals and outcomes come to fruition? As all are "social well-being" focused, when will we begin to see the following:
  - Increased community dialogue; service mapping/gap analysis
  - Referral activity and spread in the region
  - Provider onboarding of libraries

Data Utilization: We will use the metrics in the "Impact" section above to keep the team accountable and ultimately track progress and measure progress. Any organization registered on the platform is able to confirm progress constantly towards our performance goals through qualitative and quantitative measurements. Quantitative insights include: Data collected through the technology platform is used to determine speed in responding to clients' requests for referrals; Data collected on the platform is used to determined the network's accuracy in connecting clients to services. Qualitative insights include: Client feedback surveys are used to determine client satisfaction with the process; Provider feedback surveys are used to determine the providers' experience in using the network and efficiencies realized; Provider focus groups are hosted to deep dive into challenges faced and develop solutions. These insights will be shared at each IPR and focus groups but are also visible on the platform by any registered organization.

Use of Grant: The total budget for the NCServes – Western project over a period of performance of 12 months is $150,000. The IVMF will utilize the grant request from ILMS to cover the project costs, coordination efforts, and staff time in facilitating provider engagement and network coordination.

IMLS Project October 2017-November 2018		
Line Items	**Funds Requested**	**% of Total Funds**
IVMF/Syracuse University Technical Assistance • Personnel Effort	$54,049	36%
Travel • $4,000 for staff travel to Asheville, North Carolina for strategic planning and one-on-ones with community leaders • $6,000 in award funds for travel to attend IMLS-designated meetings	$10,000	7%
Materials and Supplies • Printed materials, routine supplies, program collateral	$5,000	3%
Event Hosting • Meetings and In progress reviews hosted in Asheville libraries- light refreshments, A/V, room rental	$5,000	3%
Unite US Technology Licenses • Software Licenses to be distributed to community organizations for free access and use of the technology platform	$45,000	30%
Facilities and Administration Costs • Indirect costs calculated at the federally negotiated rate of 26% modified total costs	$30,951	21%
Total Project Costs	**$150,000**	

With this financing plan, and schedule of completion in the attachments, our goal is dual-pronged: promulgate libraries in the region as place-based hubs of learning and coordination while also pushing libraries forward in their role as value-add providers.