

CREATIVE START: Creative Economic Development in Libraries

The New Mexico State Library (NMSL), in partnership with Creative Startups, requests \$50,000 to plan and test a project model to transform rural and tribal libraries into vibrant creative economy development hubs. Project activities include: blended, intensive learning for creative entrepreneurs, creating a statewide cohort of 30 rural and tribal entrepreneurs; professional training for library staff and local Educators; and implementation of robust library services that target needs of creative entrepreneurs. Through this project, rural and tribal libraries will become change catalysts, driving economic opportunity, wealth creation, and inclusion in their communities.

PROJECT GOAL Through this project, a replicable and scalable model will be prototyped, transforming rural and tribal libraries into: **(1) vibrant community anchors**, demonstrating rural and tribal libraries are critical assets for supporting creative entrepreneurs in deep learning opportunities and growth; **(2) knowledge centers** for creative entrepreneurs to gain ongoing access to business support tools, community, and information.

STATEMENT OF NEED Otis College of Art and Design defines creative economy as “many creative activities whether expressed as art or innovation. The creative economy is largely...a designated set of industries that depend upon individual creativity to generate employment and wealth.”¹ An UNESCO Cultural Times report highlights how development projects that focus on building creative and cultural infrastructure act as catalysts for strengthening local identity and building economy². This type of creative placemaking attracts tourism and appeals to a more highly skilled and talented workforce which leads to more livable communities, with active and engaged citizens. The U.S. creative economy outpaces almost all economic sectors, and growth in creative economy ranges between 4-12% annually. New Mexico’s cultural and creative economy resonates with national and international trends, contributing \$5.6 billion to the economy and providing 1 in 10 jobs. As recognized knowledge centers with existing infrastructure, rural and tribal libraries are poised to act as catalysts for local creative economies. This project expands prior NMSL project success: in 2013-2017, NMSL led the NM Makerstate Initiative, a statewide makerspace project that delivered events to mostly in rural locations. Local creativity and culture quickly became the focus of events, leading to the question, “How can libraries, as knowledge and community engagement centers, nurture and support growth of rural creative economies?”

PROJECT DESIGN

Phase 1: Advisory Board (Quarter 1) NMSL will bring together experts from business, creative, tribal nations and library sectors, in and out of the state, to inform all aspects of the project. The advisory board will include Alice Loy, Ph.D., & Lena Ramfelt, Creative Startups; Michael Delello, NM Dept. of Cultural Affairs; Joan Divor, Burlington Business Library (NJ); Carnell Chosa of the Leadership Institute at Santa Fe Indian School, Sarah Boisvert of Fab Lab Hub; RYanne Cooper, NMSL; and library staff from the pilot libraries.

Phase 2: Planning (Quarters 1-2) Five rural and tribal libraries will be recruited to pilot the project. Upon recruitment, Creative Startups educators will visit the pilot sites and conduct an intake survey, as a preliminary investigation of the library and community resources and needs. Intake surveys will inform training needs and shape project content and delivery. Pilot libraries will recruit local facilitators (“Educators”) to be trained to support the project and to act as local touch-points for entrepreneurs. Library staff and Educators will attend a two-day, in-person introductory workshop. There, NMSL and Creative Startups will introduce the project goals, project tools, and prepare library staff and Educators with foundational knowledge. Support materials (e.g. handbook for library staff and Educators, marketing materials, recruitment materials, entrepreneur applications) and entrepreneur selection will be completed as part of planning.

Phase 3: Implement Model Prototype (Quarters 2-3):

> **Creative Startup LABS for Entrepreneurs** Creative Startups will lead cohort training for entrepreneurs, “LABS,” at five participating libraries through a blended learning model. LABS will deliver intensive 4-week

¹ Otis Report on the Creative Economy: Los Angeles Region (2017). Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation.

² UNESCO Creative Economy Report 2013 Special Edition: Widening Development Pathways (2013).

³ Building on the Past, Facing the Future: Renewing the Creative Economy of New Mexico (2014). UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

coursework to 30 entrepreneurs in rural/remote communities. Locally-relevant instruction will be conducted independently and in group activities, and will include twice-weekly engagement in online coursework plus Skype one-on-one mentoring with Creative Startups faculty. Educators will facilitate online learning sessions providing technical support, differentiated learning support, and being a local coordinator. Courses will explore business-thinking fundamentals, underlying practices, and trends that develop creative ideas to thriving enterprises in context of the gig economy. Entrepreneurs will form a peer-circle, building confidence and community. Educators will connect entrepreneur participants to mentors, locally or statewide. Creative Startups faculty will provide additional face-to-face, skills-focused workshops with topics such as “How to Etsy,” Podcasting for Profit,” and “YouTube for Small Business.” In week four of LABS, entrepreneurs will be brought together to pitch their creative product or service.

> Access to Tech Supporting Entrepreneurial Growth At each library, media equipment will support the growth of digital literacy skills surrounding the project and provide tools for entrepreneurs to develop product, services, and relationships with consumers. Entrepreneurs will use equipment to create graphics, social media marketing campaigns, YouTube videos/commercials, online stores, podcasts, and overall web business presence. Creative Startups will train library staff on equipment use; skill-focused workshops will train entrepreneurs on tools. The Fab Lab at Santa Fe Community College has pledged resources to support entrepreneur participants. The Fab Lab will provide access and support to entrepreneurs throughout the project, to use the space for prototyping products or for creating virtual models.

> Implement Robust Creative Economy Hubs in Libraries A business librarian consultant will prepare pilot site staff to use library-thinking and services to support creative entrepreneur and the local creative economy. Librarians will receive consultation on curating collections, both print and digital. Additional training will prepare libraries to lead ongoing community conversations and events, cultivating community among rural entrepreneurs. The business librarian will prepare the library to be facilitator, knowledge provider, and community connector for small businesses and creative, conducting community-wide engagement events. Event topics might include creative placemaking and developing a community theme. Librarians will receive training to conduct flipped classroom events to teach entrepreneurs how to use library business resources practically. Librarians will also learn to create online business portals relevant to their communities.

Phase 4: Wrap Up and Evaluation (Quarter 4) NMSL and Creative Startups will host a two-day reflection workshop, bringing together library staff and Educators to engage in dialog and discussion, assessing successes and gaps. This will inform next steps, including content and larger-scale implementation. An independent evaluator will conduct an in-depth, summative evaluation using qualitative and quantitative data, analyzing librarians’ and entrepreneurs’ gains in knowledge, skills, self-confidence, as well as the depth to which activities support a thriving creative economy. Evaluation activities include intake surveys, pre- and post-questionnaires and interviews with selected participants to capture impressions and perceptions.

7. Dissemination (Quarter 4) NMSL and Creative Startups will widely disseminate project implementation, materials, and results locally and nationally through a project website, through national library information networks, and conference presentations (COSLA, ARSL, ALA, ATALM). Creative Startups will publish an impact report, printed and distributed online.

NATIONAL IMPACT The project model, once tested, will be prepared for large-scale implementation. In particular, this model will be an economic development tool for rural and specialized populations; or populations that are experiencing isolation from markets trends and online engagement. If successful, NMSL and Creative Startups will seek future partnerships and funding to expand the model in different environments, engaging other rural and tribal populations nationally and US territories.

BUDGET LABS, \$20,000; Business Librarian Consultant, \$3,000; Pilot libraries travel to pre/post meeting, \$7,000; Tech Equipment for Libraries, \$10,000; Educators Stipends, \$3,000; Evaluation, \$3,000; Dissemination, \$2,000. TOTAL: \$50,000.