

Scaling and Sustaining Local Contexts: Strengthening Infrastructure and Community Engagement for Implementing the TK & Biocultural Labels and Notices

Building on the national and international momentum in libraries, archives and digital repositories to implement the Traditional Knowledge (TK) & Biocultural (BC) Labels and Notices, New York University is applying for the National Leadership Grant for Libraries (National Digital Infrastructures and Initiatives) for *Scaling and Sustaining Local Contexts: Strengthening Infrastructure and Community Engagement for Implementing the TK & Biocultural Labels and Notices*. This Project Grant is focused on increasing the capacity of [Local Contexts](#) to deliver the critical digital intervention of TK & BC Labels and Notices supporting the inclusion of Indigenous rights and interests within national library and archive digital information infrastructures. With over 100+ institutions in first stage implementation, Local Contexts is at a critical moment of development. We will focus on key functional and technical areas that will enable Local Contexts to scale and maintain sustainability. These include:

- Exploring organizational structure options for effective delivery of Local Contexts services;
- Determining business models and metrics for effective community engagement and delivery of Labels and Notices;
- Fielding user focus groups to identify integration workflows that minimize barriers and incentivize adoption of Labels and Notices;
- Standardizing and documenting Labels and Notices fields for successful implementation across a spectrum of metadata standards.

National Need & Impact

How to build equity, diversity, and sovereignty into digital infrastructures is the critical issue of our time. Indigenous cultural heritage and biological collections are unique in composition, content, in their social and cultural value to the communities from where they derive and to non-Indigenous publics seeking to better understand the complexity of Indigenous cultures and cultural practices. While these collections are enormous, they unfortunately have limited information about them and consequently impoverished metadata. In addition, complex historical-political conditions create ethical concerns around access and future circulation. Organizations like the Society of American Archivists, have established specific protocols for the treatment of Indigenous collections generally and increasingly libraries and archives around the globe have heeded Indigenous peoples' calls to integrate Indigenous curatorial models and knowledge into mainstream library and archive practices, from cataloging to display modes.

Local Contexts is an extra-legal protocol and provenance mechanism establishing equity by embedding Indigenous rights and interests within digital information infrastructures. Local Contexts was founded in 2010 to bring forth the voices, authority, and local power of Indigenous communities in sharing and managing their intellectual and cultural property in cultural heritage, biological, and genetic resources. It offers digital strategies for Indigenous communities, cultural institutions, and researchers through the key innovation of the Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Biocultural (BC) Labels and Notices. The Labels and Notices are incorporated at a catalogue, classification and metadata level to foster equitable management of Indigenous collections through non-legal, educational, inclusive mechanisms. As adaptable, community-driven tools for curating the public historical record, the Labels also support the development of new workflows around vetting the rights and protocols for Indigenous content.

Local Contexts has two primary objectives: (1) to enhance and legitimize locally based decision-making and Indigenous governance frameworks for determining ownership, access, and culturally appropriate conditions for sharing historical, contemporary, and future collections of

cultural, biological, and genetic heritage and associated data; and (2) to increase Indigenous involvement in data governance through the integration of Indigenous values into data management platforms and protocols. The TK & BC Labels and Notices are widely recognized as the most important *practical* digital infrastructure intervention addressing Indigenous rights and interests within collections and data held in libraries, archives and other digital repositories as well as that being currently generated by researchers working with Indigenous communities.

Over the last seven years the Local Contexts team has developed Notices and Labels in collaboration with cultural institutions and Indigenous communities – identifying unique digital preservation and stewardship needs, defining areas of challenge in relation to legal and extra-legal frameworks, creating and implementing customizable TK Labels, initiating an education and training curriculum for Indigenous communities, and producing reusable workflows for the ongoing management of digital collections. The Labels and Notices are created and delivered through the Local Contexts Hub. The Hub is a safe place for communities to customize and update their unique TK & BC Labels and then deliver them in a csv, zip archive or JSON file to any institution for implementation. Institutions and researchers use the Hub to create Notices for collection items and to communicate with Indigenous communities. The Hub, based at NYU Libraries, is an open-source project that enables information exchange through an open API. The Hub utilizes the power of open persistent identifiers for Labels & Notices to enable machine learning and enhanced search capabilities. Key US institutions that have either implemented TK & BC Labels and Notices or are in the initial implementation phase include the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, American Philosophical Society, Abbe Museum, University of Maine, Sam Noble Museum, New York State Museum, Archive and Library, the Field Museum and the New York Botanical Gardens. International institutions include: Wellcome Collections, Sanger Institute, Royal Botanical Gardens Kew, Te Papa and National Archives New Zealand, and the Royal Museum of British Columbia.

Performance Goals, Outcomes, Workplan

Our goal in this project is to create the organizational and technical frameworks that support community adoption and ongoing delivery of Local Contexts Notices and Labels services. Success means: (1) Indigenous communities have a clear, accessible, and culturally appropriate digital platform for inclusion in collection curation; (2) Researchers have a clear, accessible platform for engaging with Indigenous communities on collections; (3) Collections managers and institutions have a robust platform for managing ethical accessibility to their Indigenous collections.

Project deliverables include: (1) **Scope of Services.** In collaboration with our already existing Cultural Institution and Community Labels Working Groups of over 150 members, we will discuss service options and implementation workflows. Using a focus group approach, we will identify incentives and barriers to adoption and uptake. This will allow us to reform and scale our existing models as well as identify specific training needs. (2) **Business model options.** Based on the scope of services developed in (1), we will develop a business plan for delivery of services. This will include organizational structure, governance, potential service partner organizations, and a sustainable funding model. (3) **Adoption and Implementation.** In collaboration with the platform stakeholders – Indigenous communities, researchers, and Institutions - we will map out key success metrics for each community, and establish data collection workflows to track adoption, identify barriers, and assess progress. This work will include standardization of Notices and Labels to enable their adoption across the spectrum of platforms and metadata standards used by libraries, archives and digital repositories.

Budget Summary

The total budget for this two-year project is \$675,795 with a \$337,897 cost share. Project costs include salaries and wages: \$289,033; Fringe: \$86,710; Consultants: \$116,000; Guideline Production \$21,000; Indirect Costs are \$163,052.