



# NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR LIBRARIES

Sample Application LG-259586-OLS-26  
Project Category: Planning

## New Mexico State Library

|                         |           |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Amount awarded by IMLS: | \$197,604 |
| Amount of cost share:   | \$58,716  |

The New Mexico State Library in partnership with Creative Startups will plan to develop a scalable system for identifying, documenting, and sharing effective library-led programs that support small business development, workforce pathways, financial literacy, and technology skills. The plan is to design and pilot a national platform that disseminates adaptable program models and toolkits developed by libraries across the country. The planning will take place with DreamSpring, and the Association for Rural and Small Libraries. The project will document proven programs developed by Entrepreneurship Librarians, test resources with a national focus group, and develop a sustainability plan for maintaining and expanding the platform. The intended results include a pilot collection of library program models and toolkits, a functioning resource-sharing platform, and a long-term implementation plan that supports libraries nationwide in strengthening economic opportunity programming.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

**--Narrative--**

## **Introduction**

The New Mexico State Library, in partnership with Creative Startups, proposes Libraries as Launchpads: Economic Pathways, an 18-month planning project to develop a scalable system for identifying, documenting, and sharing effective library-led programs that support small business development, workforce pathways, financial literacy, and technology skills. The project requests \$197,603.56 in IMLS funding, with \$58,716.00 in cost share, to design and pilot a national platform that disseminates adaptable program models and toolkits developed by libraries across the country. Libraries increasingly serve as trusted community institutions where residents seek guidance navigating employment, business development, and economic systems, particularly in rural and remote communities where other support services may be limited. Working with partners including Creative Startups, DreamSpring, and the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL), the project will document proven programs developed by Entrepreneurship Librarians, test resources with a national focus group, and develop a sustainability plan for maintaining and expanding the platform. The intended results include a pilot collection of library program models and toolkits, a functioning resource-sharing platform, and a long-term implementation plan that supports libraries nationwide in strengthening economic opportunity programming.

## **Project Justification**

Libraries as Launchpads: Economic Pathways builds on nearly a decade of collaboration between the New Mexico State Library and nonprofit partner Creative Startups to strengthen libraries' roles as civic centers that support economic opportunity. Through professional development, partnerships, and program innovation, the initiative equips library workers to help community members navigate pathways to employment, business ownership, financial literacy, and digital skills development. The project aligns with the National Leadership Grants for Libraries program goal to "develop, enhance, or disseminate replicable practices, programs, models, or tools to strengthen library and archival services for the American public" and supports Objective 1.2: "Improve community prosperity through libraries and archives." By documenting and sharing effective library-led programs that connect patrons with workforce pathways, small business resources, and financial literacy education, the project advances IMLS Goal 1: Champion Lifelong Learning and Goal 2: Strengthen Community Engagement. It also responds directly to FY2026 priorities highlighted by the Office of Library Services encouraging projects that leverage libraries' roles to connect workers with employers, skills training, and the public workforce system, and those that promote adult and financial literacy.

The proposed project builds on previous IMLS-supported work through the Libraries as Launchpads initiative (LaL). In 2018, the New Mexico State Library received an IMLS National Leadership planning grant to pilot the initiative with five public and tribal libraries in New Mexico. That effort demonstrated the potential for libraries to serve as effective connectors within local business ecosystems and informed the creation of the Entrepreneurship Librarian Certification Program. Over the past eight years, this initiative has grown into a network of more than 90 Certified Entrepreneurship Librarians representing a wide array of regions and community contexts. Librarians have hosted hundreds of programs and supported thousands of aspiring business owners while strengthening connections between libraries, workforce systems, business resources, and financial literacy services.

Libraries as Launchpads: Economic Pathways represents the next stage of this work. Rather than focusing solely on training, the project will identify and document successful library-led programs developed within this national

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network and translate them into adaptable models, toolkits, and implementation guides that can be shared nationally. By capturing proven approaches and making them accessible to other libraries, particularly those serving rural and remote communities, the project will strengthen libraries' capacity to support economic participation and lifelong learning across the country.

### Need Statement

Across the United States, libraries increasingly serve as trusted civic centers where community members gather to access information, develop new skills, and navigate emerging technologies. Public surveys consistently show that Americans view libraries as accessible and trusted institutions that support lifelong learning, digital access, and community development<sup>1</sup>. In many communities, particularly rural and remote regions, the library may be one of the few public institutions where residents can receive free in-person assistance exploring employment options, starting small businesses, improving digital skills, or strengthening financial literacy.

Economic conditions in many rural communities underscore the importance of this role. Nationally, rural counties experience lower median household incomes and fewer locally available workforce development programs, business support services, and access to capital than urban areas.<sup>2</sup> These challenges are particularly visible in states like New Mexico, where 25 of the state's 33 counties have population densities below 15 persons per square mile and approximately 18% of residents live below the federal poverty level.<sup>3</sup>

Over the past year, *Libraries as Launchpads* has received hundreds of inquiries from aspiring business owners seeking a library near them that offers small business support. Small businesses and self-employment remain essential drivers of economic opportunity in the United States. Small businesses represent 99.9% of all U.S. businesses and employ nearly half of the private workforce.<sup>4</sup> In many rural communities, small business ownership represents one of the most feasible pathways to economic mobility and local economic growth. Library staff increasingly encounter patrons seeking guidance on starting businesses, finding funding, learning digital tools for work, or connecting with workforce training programs. Libraries across the country are already playing an important role in supporting job seekers, business owners, and digital skill-building, workforce programming, and community partnerships.<sup>5</sup> These interactions highlight an opportunity for libraries to support adult learning and financial literacy, both priorities identified by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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<sup>1</sup>Horrigan, J.B. (2016) *Libraries 2016*, Pew Research Center.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2016/09/09/libraries-2016/> (Accessed: 19 February 2026).

<sup>2</sup>Farrigan, T., Genetin, B., Sanders, A., Pender, J., Thomas, K. L., Winkler, R., Cromartie, J. (2024). *Rural America at a glance* (Report No. EIB-282). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

<https://doi.org/10.32747/2024.8722498.ers> (Accessed: 23 February 2026)

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). *American Community Survey 5-year estimates: Poverty status in the past 12 months*.

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy (2024) 2024 small business profile research outreach regulation. [https://advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/United\\_States.pdf](https://advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/United_States.pdf) (Accessed: 02 March 2026).

<sup>5</sup>Mt. Auburn Associates (2022) *Public libraries' role in workforce and Small Business Development: A look across ten public library systems*, Institute of Museum and Library Services.

<https://www.ims.gov/publications/public-libraries-role-workforce-and-small-business-development-look-across-ten-public> (Accessed: 23 February 2026).

### **--Narrative--**

Despite their strong community relationships and commitment to public service, many library workers report limited formal training or confidence in navigating small business ecosystems, workforce systems, financial literacy resources, or emerging technologies. Without clear frameworks, program models, or referral pathways, support is often provided informally through internet searches, printed resources, or ad hoc conversations. While this assistance is valuable, it can place strain on library staff and limit the broader impact libraries could have on the progress of businesses served and as connectors to existing economic development systems.

Libraries possess core strengths that position them to serve as effective civic connectors: trusted community relationships, neutral and welcoming public spaces, and established programming infrastructure. When equipped with practical training, adaptable program models, and partnerships with civic institutions such as workforce agencies, community lenders, and economic development organizations, libraries can help residents navigate pathways to employment, business ownership, and financial stability. This work does not replace existing workforce or business development services when they are available. Instead, libraries amplify the impact of those systems by helping patrons understand available resources and connecting them with trusted partners.

The project builds on this opportunity by identifying, documenting, and disseminating effective library-led economic programming developed by library workers who have participated in the Entrepreneurship Librarian Program. By strengthening financial literacy education, connecting patrons to workforce pathways, and facilitating partnerships with civic institutions, the project advances a model in which libraries serve as entry points into broader systems of economic opportunity. The project also responds to a growing need among rural and small libraries for practical guidance and peer learning networks. They often operate with limited staff capacity and funding, even as they remain deeply embedded in their communities and maintain strong relationships with residents and local organizations.<sup>6</sup> Peer learning models have proven effective in helping small and rural libraries build capacity by sharing resources, strategies, and lessons across institutions facing similar challenges.<sup>7</sup> By documenting successful programs, developing adaptable toolkits, and facilitating peer engagement, this project will help libraries across the country adopt approaches that strengthen community economic resilience while reinforcing libraries' roles as trusted civic centers.

### **Building on Existing Models and Practice**

Across the library field, organizations and practitioners have increasingly explored how libraries can support local economic opportunity through workforce preparation, digital inclusion, and small business support. National initiatives demonstrate the growing role libraries play in helping community members access new economic opportunities. The American Library Association's *Libraries Build Business* initiative provided support for 13 libraries to develop business programs and authored the Libraries Business Business Playbook with advice for libraries just getting started. The Public Library Association's *Skilling for Employment Program*, helps libraries provide patrons with access to career development tools and technical skills training. The Urban Libraries Council's workforce and economic development initiatives [ULC's Business Value Calculator \(BVC\)](#) helps public libraries

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<sup>6</sup>Real, B., Bertot, J. C., & Jaeger, P. T. (2014). Rural Public Libraries and Digital Inclusion: Issues and Challenges. *Information Technology and Libraries*, 33(1), 6–24. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ital.v33i1.5141> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

<sup>7</sup> TCC Group. (2023). *Evaluation findings from the Accelerating Promising Practices for Small and Rural Libraries (APP) program*. Institute of Museum and Library Services. <https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/app-evaluation-report.pdf> (Accessed: 26 February 2026).

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quantify the economic impact of their support to business in their communities. In addition, IMLS-funded research and programs have highlighted the important role libraries play in supporting business development, digital access, and lifelong learning. Together, these initiatives demonstrate growing recognition that libraries can serve as civic connectors within local economic ecosystems by helping residents access information, training, partnerships, and resources that support employment and business ownership.

Launched in 2018 through an IMLS National Leadership planning grant, Libraries as Launchpads was among the early initiatives focused specifically on equipping librarians to support economic opportunity within their communities. LaL has engaged with and learned from many of these other efforts while continuing to respond to needs expressed by library workers across the country. While national programs have expanded access to training and resources, many librarians, particularly those serving rural and small communities, continue to seek practical examples of how these ideas translate into sustainable local programming. Through the LaL Entrepreneurship Librarian Certification Program, participating librarians develop the knowledge and partnerships needed to understand local business ecosystems and support patrons exploring business creation and self-employment pathways. Many have translated this training into locally responsive programs connecting patrons with small business resources, digital skills training, financial literacy education, and workforce opportunities.

A few examples include: In Iowa, librarian Kellee organizes *Small Biz in Small Libraries*, a monthly event connecting business owners with peers, mentors, and chamber of commerce partners. In North Dakota, librarian Sandy partnered with a local corporation to host a Shark Tank–style pitch competition providing funding and mentorship for emerging businesses. In New Mexico, Eva conducted a community needs assessment and built countywide partnerships that resulted in a centralized resource platform for aspiring business owners. In Ohio, Melissa developed a business bookkeeping workshop with a local accountant helping business owners navigate business finances, and in Florida, Maria is working to establish her library as a Patent and Trademark Resource Center, helping local innovators access intellectual property resources.

Libraries as Launchpads: Economic Pathways builds on these experiences by shifting from training alone to the systematic documentation and dissemination of successful library-led programming models. Rather than asking each library to design new programs independently, the project will identify initiatives developed by librarians within this national network and translate them into adaptable templates, implementation guides, and toolkits that can be shared broadly across the library field. The project will also identify service gaps and develop strategies for engaging partners to address them. One identified need is support for patrons navigating business funding options. To address this, Libraries as Launchpads will partner with DreamSpring, a nationally recognized Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), to develop practical guidance for libraries on small business funding pathways. DreamSpring will contribute expertise on responsible lending, capital readiness, and access to financing while helping libraries understand funding options and appropriate referral practices.

Through these efforts, Libraries as Launchpads: Economic Pathways extends the impact of existing workforce and economic development initiatives by equipping libraries with practical models and partnerships that strengthen their role within local economic ecosystems.

### **Beneficiaries**

Primary beneficiaries of this project include:

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1. **Public libraries nationwide**, particularly rural and small libraries that often have limited staff capacity but strong community relationships.
2. **Library workers** who are expanding their roles as community connectors and seeking practical tools to support patrons navigating economic systems.
3. **Community members**, including aspiring business owners, job seekers, and small business owners seeking access to information, training, and economic opportunities.
4. **Local economic ecosystems**, which benefit from increased access to opportunity for community members and collaboration between libraries and other support organizations.

By strengthening libraries' capacity to support financial literacy, workforce navigation, and small business growth, LaL helps ensure that libraries remain responsive, relevant, and deeply connected to the communities they serve.

## Project Work Plan

The project will be implemented over an 18-month period through a structured sequence of activities focused on identifying, documenting, testing, and disseminating library-led economic opportunity programming. Project leadership will be shared between the New Mexico State Library Foundation and Creative Startups, with guidance from state library leadership and national partners.

Project management will be led by Ginny Sterpka, Program Manager, who will coordinate project activities, manage partnerships, and oversee implementation across all phases. Strategic oversight and support throughout the process will be provided by Eli Guinnee, New Mexico State Librarian, and Joseph Angelo, Deputy New Mexico State Librarian, ensuring alignment with statewide and national library priorities. The Creative Startups team, including Dr. Brianna Figueroa, Executive Director, and Emily Hunerwadel, Communications Director, will support program design, documentation, and dissemination. Additional expertise will be provided by Barbara Alvarez, Programming Consultant, who will lead development of implementation templates and documentation, and Karen Homm, Platform Developer, who will design and build the project's digital resource platform. National partners will contribute specialized expertise and outreach. DreamSpring, a nationally recognized Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), will contribute guidance related to business funding pathways, and the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) will support outreach to rural libraries and assist with focus group recruitment and dissemination through its national network.

### Step 1: Project Kickoff and Partner Alignment (Months 1–2)

The New Mexico State Library Foundation and Creative Startups will convene project staff and partners to finalize the work plan, timeline, and partner roles. Project coordination will be led by Ginny Sterpka, with oversight from Eli Guinnee and Brianna Figueroa. Early coordination with ARSL, DreamSpring, and participating state library partners will ensure the project aligns with national library priorities and the needs of rural and underserved communities. Activities include: finalizing the project timeline and documentation process; confirming partner roles and communication structures; identifying advisory stakeholders.

### Step 2: Program Identification and Selection Criteria (Months 2–5)

The project team will identify promising library-led programs and services developed by librarians. Coordinated by Ginny Sterpka and Barbara Alvarez, with support from Joseph Angelo and ARSL, drawing on the Entrepreneurship Librarian network to identify potential programs and services to document.

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Selection criteria will focus on programs aligned with the Economic Pathways focus areas: small business support; financial literacy; workforce connections; technology and digital skills. Five library programs and five library service models will be selected for documentation based on: demonstrated community impact; adaptability for other libraries; feasibility for small or rural institutions; strength of partnerships.

#### **Step 3: Rural Library Focus Group Recruitment and Engagement (Months 3–6)**

A Rural Library Focus Group will be recruited to provide practitioner feedback throughout the project. Coordinated by Ginny Sterpka, with support from ARSL and Joseph Angelo, leveraging ARSL's national network of rural library professionals. Focus group participants will review documentation templates, provide feedback on toolkit structure, advise on practical implementation considerations, help ensure resources are usable across diverse library environments. Focus groups will meet periodically throughout the project to provide iterative feedback during resource development.

#### **Step 4: Program and Service Documentation and Resource Development (Months 5–10)**

Creative Startups will lead documentation of selected program models and service templates. Coordination will be led by Ginny Sterpka, with documentation and template development led by Barbara Alvarez, who brings extensive experience in library business programming, instruction, and professional development. Dr. Figueroa will contribute expertise in curriculum and program development for entrepreneurs. Emily Hunerwadel will provide editorial guidance, design oversight, and communications support. Strategic oversight to ensure library best practices will be provided by Eli Guinee. Each program or service will be translated into a replicable implementation guide or template. Documentation will capture: program or service design and goals; staffing requirements; partnerships and referral networks; implementation steps; evaluation methods; lessons learned.

**DreamSpring Partnership:** DreamSpring will collaborate with the project team to develop a toolkit focused on small business funding pathways. DreamSpring will contribute expertise on responsible lending, capital readiness, and access to financing, ensuring libraries can confidently connect patrons to funding resources through appropriate referrals.

#### **Step 5: Pilot Testing and Peer Learning (Months 8–14)**

Selected libraries and focus group participants will test elements of the documented models and toolkits.

Activities include:

- piloting program templates in participating libraries
- facilitating peer-learning sessions for librarians
- gathering feedback on resource usability
- documenting implementation challenges and adaptations

Peer learning sessions will be facilitated by Ginny Sterpka and Barbara Alvarez, drawing on the Entrepreneurship Librarian Program network to encourage knowledge sharing among participating libraries.

#### **Step 6: Platform Development and Resource Organization (Months 10–15)**

The project team will design and launch a digital platform for sharing program models, toolkits, and implementation guides. Platform development will be led by Karen Himm, who will design the platform structure and resource organization system. The process will be coordinated by Ginny Sterpka, with design and content support from Emily Hunerwadel and oversight from Dr. Figueroa. The platform will allow libraries to:

**--Narrative--**

- access downloadable templates and guides
- learn from documented case examples
- explore partnership frameworks
- connect with peers implementing similar programming

The platform will serve as the foundation for a future national resource hub supporting library-led economic opportunity programming.

**Step 7: Focus Group Review and Resource Refinement (Months 12–16)**

The Rural Library Focus Group will review completed program models and toolkits. Coordinated by Ginny Sterpka, with resource refinement led by Barbara Alvarez and supported by Dr. Figueroa. Editorial and design revisions will be led by Emily Hunerwadel. Focus group members will assess:

- clarity and usability of documentation
- feasibility for libraries with limited staff capacity
- adaptability to different community contexts

Feedback will inform final revisions before publication.

**Step 8: Future Stakeholder Engagement and Implementation Planning (Months 12–17)**

The project team will engage state libraries, library associations, and national partners to inform the next phase of the initiative. Outreach will be coordinated by Ginny Sterpka, with communications strategy and materials developed by Emily Hunerwadel, and supported by ARSL and the New Mexico State Library. Activities include:

- gathering feedback on platform sustainability
- identifying funding and partnership opportunities
- refining strategies for national scaling
- developing a roadmap for future implementation

**Step 9: Dissemination and Field Engagement (Months 15–18)**

Dissemination strategy and materials will be led by Emily Hunerwadel with coordination by Ginny and supported by ARSL and the New Mexico State Library. All resources will be made publicly available through the project platform. Project results will be shared nationally through:

- presentations at library conferences, including ARSL and the Entrepreneurship and Libraries Conference
- state library and library association networks
- the Entrepreneurship Librarians network
- Libraries as Launchpads communication channels

**Step 10: Evaluation and Impact Assessment (Throughout the Project)**

Evaluation will use both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess resource usefulness and project outcomes. Coordinated by Ginny Sterpka and Joseph Angelo, with oversight from Eli Guinnee and Dr. Figueroa. Findings will inform final project resources and guide the design of the next implementation phase.

Evaluation activities will include:

- surveys measuring librarian confidence and resource usability
- focus group feedback
- participation metrics

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- interviews with participating libraries
- platform usage analytics

## **Project Results**

### **Intended Results and Deliverables**

The intended result of this planning project is to develop a scalable framework for identifying, documenting, and disseminating effective library-led programming that supports economic opportunity in communities across the United States with a focus on rural. By translating successful local programs into adaptable models and tools, the project will help libraries more confidently respond to the increasing number of patrons seeking assistance with employment, business development, financial literacy, and digital skills. The project will produce several key deliverables designed to address the needs identified in the Project Justification.

**1. National Documentation and Dissemination Plan:** The project will produce a long-range plan for documenting and sharing library-led economic opportunity programs. This plan will outline criteria for identifying effective programs, strategies for documenting them in replicable formats, and a framework for national dissemination through library networks. By establishing a structured process for capturing and sharing successful practices, the project will help address the current lack of widely available program models that libraries can use to support economic participation in their communities.

**2. Pilot Collection of Library Program Models:** The project will document five library-led programs that support economic pathways, including business development, workforce connections, financial literacy, or technology education. Each program model will include a detailed implementation guide describing program goals, staffing considerations, partnerships, evaluation approaches, and lessons learned. These documented models will translate practical, field-tested programs into accessible guides that other libraries can adapt to their own communities. By highlighting programs already implemented by practicing librarians, the project ensures that resources reflect real-world conditions faced by libraries, particularly those serving rural communities.

**3. Practical Toolkits for Libraries:** The project will develop five toolkits designed to help libraries establish or expand services supporting economic opportunity. Toolkits will include templates, service outlines, partnership guidance, referral frameworks, and practical considerations for implementation. These toolkits will address a key challenge identified by library workers: the lack of practical easy to use resources for navigating conversations about employment pathways, business development, and funding opportunities. By providing structured guidance and referral frameworks, the toolkits will help libraries support patrons while maintaining appropriate boundaries and strengthening connections with existing workforce and economic development partners.

**4. Resource-Sharing Platform:** The project will establish a digital platform where libraries can access documented program models, toolkits, and implementation guides. The platform will also support ongoing resource sharing among libraries engaged in economic opportunity programming. This platform addresses the need for peer learning and knowledge exchange across the library field. By creating a centralized hub for practical resources and program examples, the platform will help libraries discover approaches that have already been tested in similar communities. Together, these deliverables will transform libraries' trusted position within communities into actionable tools that enable library staff to guide patrons toward employment opportunities, business resources, and financial literacy support.

**--Narrative--**

**Expected Outcomes**

By the end of the planning project, the initiative anticipates the following outcomes:

1. Five documented library program models and five toolkits developed and tested through participating focus group libraries.
2. 20 or more pilot economic opportunity programs delivered in participating libraries using project templates and implementation guides.
3. 350 or more small businesses receiving support through pilot library programming or referrals, demonstrating the practical application of the models.
4. 200 or more libraries accessing project resources to explore or strengthen services related to business development, workforce pathways, financial literacy, or technology education.
5. One national resource platform established to support collaboration and knowledge exchange among libraries working to expand economic opportunity programming.

These outcomes will demonstrate the feasibility of scaling these resources nationally and inform the design of a future implementation phase.

**Adaptability and Generalizability**

All project resources will be designed to be adaptable across a wide range of library contexts, including small, rural, and under-resourced institutions, and will be reviewed and refined through feedback from a library focus group. Resources will be developed and tested to ensure they are: flexible across library sizes and community contexts; scalable for regional or statewide implementation; usable by libraries with limited staff capacity or funding; grounded in real-world examples from practicing librarians.

Focus groups composed of librarians from a wide array of geographic regions, prioritizing rural communities, will provide feedback on the practicality, clarity, and usability of the documented program models and toolkits. This process will help ensure that the resources reflect real-world implementation considerations and can be readily adapted by other libraries seeking to strengthen economic opportunity programming in their communities.

**Dissemination**

Project results will be shared nationally through a combination of professional networks, conferences, and digital communication channels. A key dissemination partner will be the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL), which represents thousands of library professionals serving rural communities. Project results will be shared through ARSL's membership network, communications channels, and conference programming, including a planned presentation at the 2027 ARSL Annual Conference.

Additional dissemination strategies include: partner state library and library association networks; the LaL national network of Certified Entrepreneurship Librarians; virtual and in-person convenings including the Entrepreneurship and Libraries Conference and ARSL Annual Conference; project publications and implementation resources; LaL communication channels, including newsletters (1200+ subscribers) and social media (1500+ followers). These dissemination efforts will ensure that project results reach libraries most likely to benefit from the resources, particularly rural and small libraries.

## **--Narrative--**

### **Sustaining Project Benefits**

This planning phase will lay the groundwork for a sustainable national platform that continues to collect, refine, and disseminate library-led economic programming models. During the project period, the team will work with state libraries, library associations, and participating institutions to explore sustainable models for maintaining and expanding the platform.

Sustaining benefits activities will include:

- Developing budgets for ongoing platform maintenance and content development;
- Assessing financial and operational capacities of partner institutions;
- Exploring cost-sharing models with state libraries and library associations;
- Identifying sponsorship and partnership opportunities;
- Developing processes for soliciting and reviewing new program models from libraries nationwide.

Following completion of the planning project, the project team intends to pursue additional funding to support full national implementation and expansion of the platform.

### **Informing Future Work**

As a planning project, the results of this initiative will directly inform the next phase of Libraries as Launchpads: Economic Pathways. The documentation process, pilot program models, focus group feedback, and stakeholder engagement conducted during the project will guide the design of a future national implementation effort.

These insights will help refine the structure of the resource platform, identify the most effective program models for replication, and determine sustainable strategies for expanding library-led economic programming nationwide. The planning process will also strengthen partnerships with state libraries, library associations, and economic development organizations, laying the groundwork for broader implementation and longevity.

### **Conclusion**

Libraries as Launchpads: Economic Pathways strengthens libraries' roles as civic centers of learning, connection, and opportunity. By documenting and sharing effective library-led programs, this project will help libraries, especially those serving rural communities, expand their ability to support small business development, workforce participation, financial literacy, and technological skills.

Through collaboration, peer learning, and practical tools developed with input from library practitioners, this initiative will equip libraries to connect community members with resources and pathways that expand economic opportunities. In doing so, the project reinforces libraries' long-standing role as trusted institutions that help communities adapt, learn, and thrive.

**--Schedule of Completion--**

| <b>Year 1: 2026-2027</b>           |             |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                                    | <i>Sept</i> | <i>Oct</i> | <i>Nov</i> | <i>Dec</i> | <i>Jan</i> | <i>Feb</i> | <i>Mar</i> | <i>Apr</i> | <i>May</i> | <i>Jun</i> | <i>Jul</i> | <i>Aug</i> |
| Step 1: Alignment                  | x           | x          |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Step 2: Identification & Selection |             | x          | x          | x          | x          |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Step 3: Recruitment                |             |            | x          | x          | x          | x          |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Step 4: Documentation              |             |            |            |            | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          |            |            |
| Step 5: Pilot Testing              |             |            |            |            |            |            |            | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          |
| Step 6: Platform Development       |             |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            | x          | x          | x          |
| Step 10: Evaluation                | x           | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          |

| <b>Year 2: 2027-2028</b>     |             |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                              | <i>Sept</i> | <i>Oct</i> | <i>Nov</i> | <i>Dec</i> | <i>Jan</i> | <i>Feb</i> | <i>Mar</i> | <i>Apr</i> | <i>May</i> | <i>Jun</i> | <i>Jul</i> | <i>Aug</i> |
| Step 5: Pilot Testing        | x           | x          |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Step 6: Platform Development | x           | x          | x          |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Step 7: Review & Refinement  | x           | x          | x          | x          |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Step 8: Planning             | x           | x          | x          | x          | x          |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Step 9: Dissemination        |             |            | x          | x          | x          | x          |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Step 10: Evaluation          | x           | x          | x          | x          | x          | x          |            |            |            |            |            |            |