

Proposal: The State Library of Iowa (SLI) will partner with the Iowa Arts Council (IAC), a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, to develop the Iowa Arts Learning in Libraries Initiative (ALLI), a one-year project that will build relationships between 25 rural public libraries with nonprofit arts organizations or artists to offer free art classes for older Iowans.

Project personnel will include: SLI Continuing Education Consultant Alysia Peich and IAC Arts Learning Manager Jennie Knoebel will co-direct the project. Additional State Library staff will assist by providing training and support to participating librarians.

Prior to working at the Iowa Arts Council, Knoebel was the Executive Director of the Austin Area Commission for the Arts in Austin, MN. While there, she launched a similar program throughout the Mower County Libraries and will use this past experience to build this statewide program. Knoebel will assist in facilitating the partnerships with the local arts organizations or artists. The teaching artists selected will either have prior experience working with older populations or will complete the National Center for Creative Aging online training.

Peich has experience successfully implementing a grant-funded, statewide financial literacy program to rural Iowa public libraries and will recruit librarians to participate. She will use State Library communication tools to promote the project, host informational sessions, and create an application process. Peich will work with her State Library colleagues and with Knoebel and staff at the Iowa Arts Council to select 25 libraries to participate in ALLI. State Library staff will train and support the librarians as they build partnerships, plan, implement, and evaluate their programs.

Relevance and Impact: ALLI will use elements of the Creative Aging Toolkit for Public Libraries (CAT4PL), created as part of a successful, IMLS funded partnership between the Westchester Library System, AARP Foundation, American Library Association's Public Program Office, Selfhelp Community Services, and Lifetime Arts. The planning and implementation components of the toolkit will be scaled to meet the needs of rural public librarians as they create partnerships, plan, implement, and evaluate their arts programs. Of the 544 public libraries in Iowa, 76 percent serve rural communities with fewer than 2,500 residents. Because CAT4PL was developed to serve the needs of libraries serving much larger communities, it will require adjustments based on the resources available to rural librarians, who struggle to meet the needs of their communities because of dwindling resources, reduced hours, and limited staff. The average number of full time employees in the rural public libraries that serve communities of fewer than 2,500 people is 1.08, which leaves staff little opportunity to do much more than keep their facilities open, provide a minimal amount of programming, and maintain small collections. With adjustments, the planning and implementation components of CAT4PL will provide rural librarians with a framework to use to successfully participate in ALLI and create partnerships with arts organizations. It will also assist in planning and implementing future programs and services. State Library staff will provide training for the participating librarians to ensure that they are familiar with the toolkit and will use it to guide their ALLI program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Public libraries serve as community anchors in rural communities, often because they are one of the few places where people can come together to learn, socialize, and access resources. Over 60 percent of Iowans live in rural communities with fewer than 2,500 residents. As such, public libraries have the potential to reach more rural Iowans than almost any other community organization. Additionally, Iowa has an aging population. In

2014, 15.8 percent of Iowa residents were aged 65 and over, with a projected jump to 20 percent by the year 2015. Ringgold County, which has the highest percentage of the population with residents aged 65 and older at 25.3 percent, has a total population of just over 5,000 and a county seat with fewer than 2,000 people. The county does, however, have a public library. The Mount Ayr Public Library has an active outreach program to assisted living facilities, and is an example of one of the rural libraries that is positioned to reach aging Iowans through arts programming. ALLI will provide libraries like Mount Ayr the opportunity to provide their aging residents with dynamic arts programming that sparks creativity and supports lifelong learning. After ALLI completion, community members will consider their library to be a place for cultural programming within their community. Our goal is for the relationships built between the libraries and the arts organizations to lead to an ongoing relationship, allowing both partners to expand their programming.

Goals and Outcomes: This project addresses the IMLS goal: “IMLS promotes museums and libraries as strong community anchors that enhance civic engagement, cultural opportunities, and economic vitality.” Therefore, the overarching goal of ALLI is to build public-private partnerships between libraries and local organizations to enhance, or in many cases offer the only, cultural opportunities within their community.

The first key outcome is to build partnerships that will assist rural libraries in building their capacity to offer more community programs. Many rural libraries have limited staff. By partnering with an outside organization, the librarian will be responsible for student recruitment and the partner will be responsible to organize and implement the program. The second key outcome is to provide more cultural programs for rural communities. Most rural communities in Iowa do not have arts-related organizations within their town. As a result, community members often have to find cultural programs elsewhere. ALLI will provide opportunities for community members to enjoy arts-related programs locally.

Each librarian will be responsible for conducting their own evaluation and Peich will be consolidating their data into a final evaluation. Information assessed through the evaluation includes: (1) number of lifelong learners that participated; (2) if there was an increase in the number of in cultural programming events in the community; and (3) did participants learn a new skill. The library and arts organization will qualitatively analyze the effectiveness of the partnership through follow up conversations after the class took place.

Budget: The estimated project budget is \$25,000 for one year. The money will be used primarily as payment to the arts organizations or teaching artists for the classes and materials they provide, and will be evenly distributed as \$1,000 to each of the 25 participating libraries.