

LiFITS: Librarians for Transformative Spaces in Kosrae

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) requests a 1-year Sparks Grant within the National Leadership Grants (NLG) for Libraries funding program in the amount of \$25,000 for LiFITS. The primary goal of LiFITS is to design and create model write-spaces in school and public libraries in Kosrae. LiFITS write-spaces will be generative places within libraries—including physical areas and aligned programming—designed to encourage local content development and enhance library user experiences in indigenous communities. As a Sparks Grant, LiFITS aims to explore how indigenous place-making in a library setting can influence user experiences and encourage generation of local bilingual content.

I. Statement of National Need. Libraries have the potential to support communities in unique ways, including Indigenous communities across the country—by housing local materials and records, helping to strengthen oral traditions and endangered languages, promoting literacy and bilingual education at all phases of life, disseminating critical information, and connecting Indigenous communities to global culture (Civallero, 2007; Roy, 2007). However, there continues to be a near complete lack of materials written and published in Indigenous languages represented in our country’s libraries (Civallero, 2007). Without consistent representation of local cultures and languages, libraries are missing an opportunity to embrace their role as anchors in Indigenous communities.

LiFITS will take place in Kosrae, one of the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Kosrae has a population 6,616 people (FSM Census, 2010). While both Kosraean and English are the official languages in the state, fewer than 2% of Kosrae’s citizens speak English as their first language, and most are classified as Limited English Proficiency (FSM, 2016). The Kosrae Department of Education (KDOE) is working to revise the state’s language education policy to strengthen bilingualism and biliteracy in both Kosraean and English for its pre-K to grade 12 students. Still more work is needed to support this new policy and an essential component of effective policy implementation is the availability of appropriate bilingual texts across grades. In school-year 2015-2016, only 32% of grade 6 students meeting or exceeding the minimum competency levels for reading and English language arts (FSM JEMCO, 2016). Findings from PREL’s Successful Early Eco-literacy Development program (IMLS LG-07-13-0326-13), recently been completed in Kosrae, indicate that Kosrae teachers and librarians requested more locally-relevant, bilingual materials and additional training on the use of materials to support language and content learning. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education’s 2016 Identifying and Addressing Regional Education Needs, Regional Advisory Committee report identified “development of tools and resources for English language learners...specific to the distinctive demographics, culture, and education characteristics of each state” and “strengthening community and stakeholder engagement,” as core needs.

II. Project Design. LiFITS builds on ongoing language policy and implementation efforts in Kosrae and consider ways in which users’ experiences in public and school libraries could enhance the generation of local, bilingual reading and audio-visual resources needed to support language learning and knowledge transmission. LiFITS proposes the following tasks for a Sparks Grant:

- Initiate needs assessment to identify current attitudes toward library use among community sectors in Kosrae
- Co-develop a User Experience (UX) guide for local library write-spaces with a network of local librarians, educators, and community partners. The UX guide development will be designed on research sub-questions, such as: What is an indigenous/local learning space in Kosrae? When do our stories emerge? In what formats are stories best shared in community? How can community’s generative spaces (e.g., church, events, ceremonies, family gatherings) be reflected in school/public libraries to support the library as a community hub for language learning and knowledge sharing?
- Develop and pilot write-space programming, in which the core team (a) generates texts, including stories, that are aligned with the KDOE curricula; (b) becomes familiar with the self-publishing process,

and (c) creates their own workshop series to support students, teachers, and community members in utilizing their library's write-space

- Refine write-space programming with feedback from core team, including publication of a replicable model (UX guide) for national dissemination

Evaluation will be embedded, particularly at the UX guide development and write-space piloting and will monitor write-space usage by students, teachers, and community members (quantitative), as well as to what extent generative spaces in libraries impact attitudes of users toward their libraries as community hubs for learning and knowledge sharing (qualitative, quantitative). Data will be collected via survey and select interviews of participating students, teachers, and community members. Project outputs will include (a) a needs assessment of library use in Kosrae; (b) replicable, scalable model write-spaces in one public library and at least one school library setting; (c) prototype of self-published bilingual books that are place-based and aligned with the KDOE curricula; and (d) a publication of a replicable model (UX guide) for Indigenous write-spaces for national dissemination. Target audience will be school and public library professionals, students in pre-K to grade 12 students and their teachers in rural Kosrae, FSM.

PREL will serve as the project lead and manage all phases on the project in collaboration with partners. PREL is an independent nonprofit organization that serves the Pacific community with educational programs and services. Areas of work include languages and literacies; science, mathematics, and ecoliteracy; parent and community engagement, culturally responsive curriculum and resource development; teacher and leadership development; and assessment and program evaluation. PREL has collaborated closely with libraries and museums around the Pacific region to offer librarian professional development and community-based projects, such as SEED: Successful Early Ecoliteracy Development (IMLS LG-07-13-0326-13).

Kosrae Department of Education is the only state education agency in Kosrae, operating six elementary schools and one high school. The official languages of instruction are Kosraean (grades K–3), Kosraean and English (grades 4–5) and English only (grades 6–12). Kosrae has a K–12 student enrollment of approximately 2,286. Each school has its own library and librarian, as well as access to the public library.

Rose Mackwelung Public Library is the only public library in Kosrae and is operated by the KDOE. Situated at the center of town, the library serves the public, as well as high school students and students from the College of Micronesia. In its collection, the library houses 15,000 reference materials, children's books, fiction and nonfiction materials, and Pacific island resources. Rose Mackwelung Library is a member of the Pacific Island Association of Libraries, Archives and Museum.

III. National Impact. LiFITS will explore Indigenous place-making in libraries to support bilingual learning and content generation and result in a replicable UX guide for Indigenous write-spaces that can be utilized nationwide. Additionally, LiFITS intends to address IMLS Agency-level Goal 2: Communities by providing an opportunity and replicable model for local libraries to redesign physical spaces in ways that better serve Indigenous communities, particularly around generating bilingual texts for libraries and schools. Additionally, LiFITS will support library professionals in (a) increasing their confidence in generating and publishing bilingual texts appropriate for libraries and schools in Kosrae; and (b) increasing their knowledge and skills in training peers to create write-spaces. Project efforts will be sustainable past the performance period, as the new write-spaces will remain open in Kosrae libraries and the UX guide for Indigenous write-spaces will be made publicly available.

VI. Budget. PREL requests a total budget of \$25,000. This includes: \$6,601 (personnel), \$1,980 (fringe benefits), \$2,405 (travel), \$787 (soft- and hardware supplies/equipment), \$1,861 (facilities), \$500 (meeting spaces, professional learning), \$5,552 (services and stipends), and \$5,315 (indirect costs at PREL's federally-approved rate of 27%).