NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRAY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Sample Application NAE-259225-OLS-25

Village of Dot Lake

Amount awarded by IMLS: $150,000

The Village of Dot Lake will enhance community access to continuing education and cultural preservation resources through an expanded library program. Project funds will support youth activities, enrich Culture Camp offerings with library-based programs, and enable the library to offer longer hours of availability each week. A key focus area is the continued preservation of the Upper Tanana Athabascan language, with support for newly digitized language resources and tools to ensure that future generations have access to their cultural heritage. This ongoing development of traditional knowledge archives will enrich the community's educational opportunities, cultural engagement, and overall quality of life.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Tribal Profile
- 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.

Dot Lake Village: Tribal Profile

History and Governance

Dot Lake Village is a traditional Athabascan tribe that formally adopted its first constitution in the early 1970s. Today, a five-member council, elected from among the Tribal membership, governs the Village. The council president and vice president oversee the day-to-day operations of multiple departments, including the Village library. Since 2016, the council has actively worked to address critical issues such as drug abuse, poverty, crime, and illiteracy, developing and launching programs that target core challenges faced by Dot Lake and other Tribes in the region. In addition, Dot Lake frequently partners with neighboring Tribal councils to share services and resources, striving to provide comprehensive support across communities where needed.

Setting and Community

Dot Lake is located approximately 150 miles south of Fairbanks, along the Alaska Range, positioned between the small communities of Delta Junction and Tok. Although the Village lies along a highway system, members often encounter transportation barriers that limit their access to higher education, cultural resources, and everyday necessities—challenges that are less common in more urbanized areas of the lower 48 states. Currently, there are 160 Tribal members enrolled, and the Village library serves as a central hub for both residents and non-residents alike. Through the library's educational and cultural programs, Dot Lake Village continues to promote literacy, preserve Athabascan traditions, and support the evolving needs of its community.

Dot Lake Village Library Project Justification:

The Native Village of Dot Lake is an interior Athabascan Tribe located approximately 150 miles south of Fairbanks, Alaska. Although connected by the state highway system, the community remains rural and remote, with travel to population centers often hindered by limited transportation options and extreme weather conditions.

Recognizing the need for educational and cultural resources closer to home, our Tribe launched the Dot Lake Village library with funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Now entering its third year, the library operates four hours daily, Monday through Friday, and has steadily built a collection of educational materials and digital access points aimed at bridging the gap between our community and the opportunities more readily found in urban areas.

Despite these initial successes, we have identified ongoing challenges through conversations with Tribal leadership, analysis of library usage data, and feedback collected at tribal events.

Inadequate public transportation, limited personal travel options, and reduced operational hours continue to restrict access to resources that are vital for both formal education and cultural preservation. These concerns echo broader findings from studies on rural digital inequity, underlining the critical need for expanded library services, reliable internet connectivity, and targeted educational programs.

Our primary audience encompasses the entire Tribal community, including youth eager for story times and reading materials that spark their interest, and elders who seek opportunities to preserve and pass on our Upper Tanana Athabascan language.

Engaging directly with older Tribal members and community stakeholders revealed the necessity of extended library hours to accommodate after-school study sessions, digital access to support distance learning, and culturally focused activities to keep our language and traditions alive.

By addressing these needs in partnership with our community, the project will have an immediate and meaningful impact, ensuring that essential educational and cultural resources remain accessible and relevant to those who need them most.

Project Work Plan:

Specific Activities and Sequence

1. **Staffing and Training (Months 1–2):** The head librarian will increase hours at the library and will manage the expanded library hours and new programs. Key staff will receive training on updated library resources, digital resources, and best practices for youth and language-preservation programming.
2. **Resource Expansion (Months 2–12):** The library will acquire additional technology and materials and curate new digital resources tailored to online education and Upper Tanana Athabascan language preservation. Materials for youth activities (books, craft supplies, reading program incentives) will also be procured during this phase.
3. **Program Implementation (Months 4–24):**
    - **Extended Hours:** The library will begin operating beyond the current four-hour daily schedule to accommodate after-school visits and adult users.
    - **Youth Engagement: (Months 2-24)** The summer reading program will launch alongside culturally focused activities tied to our Culture Camp, including storytelling and language lessons.
    - **Language Preservation: (Months 2-24)** Key staff and Tribal elders will work to catalogue existing materials, digitize new Upper Tanana Athabascan materials, and incorporate language lessons into weekly sessions.
4. **Data Collection and Evaluation (Months 4–24):** The librarian will track computer usage hours, class sign-ups, attendance, and other participation metrics. Qualitative feedback will be gathered from youth, elders, and other community members to assess program effectiveness.
5. **Project Review and Reporting (Months 10–12):** Key staff and the Village Council will compile findings, prepare final reports for the Tribal community and IMLS, and discuss lessons learned and future improvements.

Key Staff

- **Head Librarian:** Oversees day-to-day library operations, coordinates extended hours, manages data tracking, and organizes cultural and educational programs.
- **Cultural Specialist (or Tribal Elder):** Guides the language preservation component and ensures cultural accuracy and respect.
- **Village Council Members:** Provide advisory support, help align library efforts with broader Tribal goals, and assist in project oversight.
- **Project Director:** The Tribe's COO will serve as the project director.

Stakeholder Involvement

Our Tribal community and Village Council have been actively involved in identifying the need for enhanced library and cultural resources through informal surveys, open forums, and Tribal meetings. During the project, stakeholders will continue to offer feedback on activities, materials, and schedules. We will incorporate their input by adjusting program offerings and hours as needed, ensuring that the library remains responsive to community needs.

Existing Resources and Potential Partners

- **Tribal Resources:** The Village Council's longstanding commitment to community enrichment offers logistical support, advocacy, and historical records for language preservation.
- **Library Assets:** Existing digital infrastructure, books, and volunteer networks are the foundation upon which this project expands.
- **Community Collaborations:** Partnerships with local cultural experts and educators will strengthen both the educational and cultural components, while relationships with regional libraries or institutions may provide additional training or resource sharing.

Sharing Results and Lessons Learned

We will share updates, final outcomes, and lessons learned through:

- **Community Forums and Social Media:** Regular public events and print/online information will highlight achievements and continuing needs.

- **Library and Tribal Websites:** Project milestones, digitized language materials, and usage metrics will be posted online for easy access.
- **IMLS and Partner Reports:** A final report detailing successes, challenges, and best practices will be shared with IMLS and any collaborating organizations, providing a blueprint for similar rural and Tribal communities seeking to enhance library and cultural resources.

Project Results:

Intended Results and Products
Our project aims to provide increased access to educational materials, particularly those related to the Upper Tanana Athabascan language, continuing education, and to expand library services for all tribal members. The primary results will include:

1. **Extended Library Services:** Longer operating hours to accommodate youth, adults, and community events.
2. **Enhanced Digital Access:** Additional computers (as needed), online learning platforms, and digitized language materials to support remote education and cultural preservation.
3. **Structured Youth Programs:** A summer reading initiative and culturally focused activities that strengthen literacy and language skills.
4. **Digitized Language Resources:** An expanded repository of Upper Tanana Athabascan materials, ensuring long-term access for future generations.

By providing these resources and programs, we directly address the challenge of limited educational and cultural opportunities in a community with scarce transportation options, ensuring that tribal members have better access to knowledge and cultural content closer to home.

Defining and Evaluating Success
We define success by the measurable growth in participation and resource utilization:

- **Usage Metrics:** Increases in library visits, computer usage hours, and program attendance.
- **Learning Outcomes:** Positive feedback from youth, elders, and adult learners regarding their experiences with online education and language learning.

- **Cultural Preservation:** Creation and use of new digital materials documenting the Upper Tanana Athabascan language, as well as ongoing language sessions and gatherings.

Evaluation will involve quantitative data (e.g., attendance logs, sign-up sheets, digital resource downloads) and qualitative feedback (e.g., surveys, informal discussions with participants). Regular review of these data will allow staff and tribal leadership to make timely adjustments and improvements.

Dissemination of Results
We plan to communicate the project's deliverables and lessons learned to the primary audience—tribal members of all ages—through:

- **Community Gatherings and Newsletters:** Updates and final outcomes will be shared during Tribal meetings and in periodic printed or digital newsletters.
- **Library and Tribal Websites/Social Media:** Online platforms will display usage reports, newly digitized content, and event summaries, making it easy for community members to access information.
- **IMLS and Partner Reporting:** Final reports, including evaluation findings, will be provided to funders and any collaborating organizations, supporting broader visibility and potential replication in other communities.

Sustainability Beyond the Project
To ensure the project's impact endures:

- **Ongoing Funding Efforts:** We will continue to seek additional grants, partnerships, and tribal budget allocations to maintain expanded library hours and digital services.
- **Community Ownership:** By training volunteers and involving key stakeholders, we encourage broader community investment, allowing these programs to remain robust after the grant period.
- **Integrated Cultural Programming:** Incorporating language and cultural activities into regular library operations will help preserve and perpetuate these efforts for future generations, making them a core part of the library's long-term mission.

Year 1

Timeline	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12
Staffing												
Training												
Resource Expansion												
Extended Hours												
Youth Engagement												
Language Preservation												
Data Collection												
Review												
Reporting												

Year 2

Timeline	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12
Staffing												
Training												
Resource Expansion												
Extended Hours												
Youth Engagement												
Language Preservation												
Data Collection												
Review												
Reporting												