



NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Sample Application NAE-260868-OLS-26

Wyandotte Nation

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$141,765

The Wyandotte Nation Library's Stories Forward: Tribal Voices in America's Ongoing Story - A Story Keepers & Story Makers Initiative will expand learning opportunities for youth and families through library-based storytelling. The pilot phase will include small-group storytelling and interview workshops where participants learn how to ask questions, listen actively, and record short interviews. Based on feedback from the pilot phase, it will expand into regularly scheduled youth and teen storytelling workshops, oral history activities, media literacy instruction, interview preparation, instruction on responsible and ethical use of artificial intelligence, and workforce and postsecondary readiness activities. Through this project, the Wyandotte Nation will promote access to skills-based learning opportunities for Tribal citizens and the surrounding community, addressing an identified interest from area students.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Tribal profile
- Proposal 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.

Tribal Profile

The Wyandotte Nation is a federally recognized Tribe located in northeastern Oklahoma, with its reservation situated in Ottawa County near the borders of Kansas and Missouri. The Wyandotte Nation's Reservation was established by treaty in 1867 and remains intact today, with the community rooted in a strong history of self-governance and community investments and a mission focused on improving the quality of life for all tribal citizens.

An elected Chief, Second Chief, and four elected council members govern the Wyandotte Nation, meeting regularly to conduct tribal business and guide long-term planning. To advance its mission and address community needs, the Wyandotte Nation operates a range of programs and services, including education, workforce development, and cultural programming.

The Wyandotte Nation's Education Department is led by Workforce Development Director Cristi Hudson and includes the Tribal Library, which is overseen by Librarian Madaline Harnar. With support from the Education Department, library staff oversee daily operations and program implementation and bring experience delivering community-based education, workforce preparation, and youth programming in rural settings.

The Tribe is headquartered in the small rural Town of Wyandotte with a population of approximately 443. Many of the Wyandotte Nation's 7,356 enrolled tribal citizens live within the town and surrounding 31-square-mile reservation within Ottawa County, Oklahoma. Ottawa County has a population of approximately 30,404 residents with over 21% identifying as Native American. Poverty rates in both the town and county significantly exceed national averages, underscoring ongoing needs related to access, education, and workforce readiness.

As the United States approaches the America 250 commemoration, the Wyandotte Nation's library and education programs provide an important venue for fostering civic learning, digital storytelling, and community reflection on shared history, identity, and participation in public life.

The Wyandotte Nation Library has served tribal citizens and the surrounding community since the 1980s and functions as a publicly accessible hub for learning, information, and community connection. Past support through Institute of Museum and Library Services' Library Enhancement Program has enabled the Tribe to establish a full-time librarian, expand hours of operation, and strengthen library programming in response to community needs and tribal priorities.

Today, the library supports a range of educational and cultural activities, including early childhood programming, youth and family learning opportunities, STEM activities, and community events, with consistent participation from students and families. The library also serves as a welcoming public space that reflects tribal culture through locally donated Native arts and crafts. Building on this foundation, the Wyandotte Nation seeks to further strengthen the library's role in supporting digital literacy, workforce development, and life skills development, youth leadership, and civic engagement for citizens of all ages.

Narrative

Project Justification

The Wyandotte Nation, a federally recognized Tribe¹ is proposing Stories Forward: Tribal Voices in America's Ongoing Story – A Story Keepers & Story Makers Initiative to expand learning opportunities for youth and families through library-based storytelling, communication skill development, and responsible use of modern technologies. The proposed project will be facilitated through the Wyandotte Nation Library, which proudly provides free public access to books, print materials, and electronic and digital media for tribal citizens and community members in a rural service area.

The Wyandotte Nation is headquartered in the Town of Wyandotte – a small rural community of 443² residents within Ottawa County Oklahoma, which borders both Kansas and Missouri. With a poverty rate 10% higher than the national average, the residents of the Wyandotte Nation's community - like many rural communities across America - experience limited access to enrichment and skill-building opportunities outside of school hours, particularly those related to digital literacy, media skills, and emerging technologies.

As a proud community hub and critical partner in civic learning, the Wyandotte Nation Library provides a trusted and accessible space where students and families can engage in educational activities. Through daily interaction with patrons and ongoing program delivery, library staff have identified a growing demand for learning opportunities that extend beyond traditional library services. Area students regularly express interest in creative projects, storytelling, and the use of digital tools, while parents and caregivers seek programs that strengthen communication, literacy, and practical life skills. Library staff have also observed that when students are exposed to digital media and new technologies, they often lack structured guidance on how to use these tools responsibly, ethically, and effectively for school, work, and community engagement.

Describing the Digital Divide facing communities such as ours, *RuralRISE*³, a global, community-driven network focused on empowering rural areas, writes, "... residents on Tribal Lands have some of the lowest rates of broadband access; this makes the need to close this gap even more significant. For Indigenous people, the internet is a tool for cultural survival and a hub for languages and traditions. Those who have access to the Internet can virtually learn traditional skills, find role models, create community, obtain an education, access healthcare, and more."

This locally identified challenge is reinforced by broader data which consistently identifies gaps in literacy achievement and access to enrichment programming in rural and high-poverty communities, where students are less likely to have sustained access to supplemental learning opportunities beyond the school day (e.g. NCES, U.S. Department of Education).

¹ Federal Register - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2026-01-30/pdf/2026-01899.pdf>

² <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/wyandotte-ok>

³ <https://www.ruralrise.org/digital-technology-literacy/>

As a community designated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a HUBzone⁴ due to being a distressed rural community having low median household incomes and high unemployment, the importance of no-cost, publicly accessible learning opportunities delivered through the Wyandotte Nation Library cannot be overstated.

Stories Forward responds to this need by integrating storytelling, oral history, and modern instructional tools into regular library programming. Advances in recording equipment, digital tools, and instructional resources – including artificial intelligence – support hands-on learning that connects tribal history and lived experience to present-day skills. This approach reflects broader national priorities to expand digital and artificial intelligence literacy through accessible, community-based education.

The primary audience for the proposed project includes Wyandotte Nation students, who will be most immediately and positively affected by expanded access to storytelling tools, communication skill development, and guided instruction in media and technology use. Students were selected as the primary audience based upon consistent participation in existing library programs and their expressed interest in creative and skill-building activities. By centering youth while also welcoming intergenerational participation, the proposed project creates opportunities for parents, caregivers, and elders to engage alongside young people through interviews, oral history activities, and family-friendly library programming.

Project planning has been led by the Wyandotte Nation Library in coordination with the Wyandotte Nation Education Department and other tribal staff who regularly interact with students and families. Planning related discussions drew on staff experience, informal feedback from students, parents, and caregivers participating in existing library programs, and assessment of participation trends of existing library activities. This collaborative approach ensured that the proposed project reflects community interest, complements existing services, and is achievable within the library's capacity over a 24-month implementation period. The project design is intentionally adaptable so that similar rural and tribal libraries can implement comparable approaches using existing staff, space, and community partnerships.

Through Stories Forward, the Wyandotte Nation Library will strengthen its ability to deliver modern, skills-based programming that supports learning, communication, and informed participation in community life. At its core, Stories Forward positions the library not only as a place to access information, but as a place where participants actively develop communication skills, create original content, and engage with their community using modern tools. By combining storytelling, technology, and life-skills instruction in a public library setting, the project supports student development, intergenerational learning, and continued community engagement while reflecting the Wyandotte Nation's ongoing role within America's civic and cultural story. In addition to supporting learning and engagement, the proposed project introduces foundational workforce readiness skills, including communication, interview preparation, and responsible use of technology – including AI – in professional settings.

⁴ <https://maps.certify.sba.gov/hubzone/map#center=36.215456,-95.408966&zoom=8&latlng=36.834623,-94.801971>

Project Work Plan

Stories Forward will be implemented over a 24-month period, from October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2028, using a deliberate, phased approach that allows the Wyandotte Nation Library to build capacity, pilot activities, and expand programming based on participation and community feedback. The proposed project is structured so learning opportunities grow within existing library operations and reflect how students and families already engage with the library.

The Wyandotte Nation's proposed project effectiveness will be assessed through participation patterns, repeat engagement, and successful completion of storytelling and communication activities. Baseline information will be established during initial program sessions using participant feedback and early activity observations. Progress will be assessed by comparing participant confidence, skill development, and engagement over time, as reflected in repeated participation, completed activities, and feedback collected throughout the project period. Quality will be evaluated through participant feedback, observed skill development, and informal instructor assessment during workshops and activities. Timeliness will be measured by adherence to the phased implementation schedule and the completion of planned activities within the project period. This approach ensures evaluation remains practical, responsive to participation, and aligned with community-based program delivery. These methods are designed to demonstrate measurable growth in participant communication, confidence, and responsible use of technology over the course of the project.

The project is intentionally designed to build upon existing Wyandotte Nation resources, including the tribal library, education staff, youth programming, community facilities, and established communication channels, rather than creating parallel or duplicative services. Specifically, Stories Forward will use existing library space and equipment workflows, the Education Department's oversight capacity, established youth programming structures, and existing community gathering points such as the Library, Title VI, and community center, to keep anticipation high without creating a new stand-alone program that families will have to learn to access.

The Wyandotte Nation will also coordinate with the Wyandotte Public School System as an existing community partner. While Stories Forward is library-based and voluntary, coordination with school staff will help the library share program information with facilities, reinforce consistent expectations around respectful storytelling and media use, and support age-appropriate participation where school and library goals overlap (reading, communication, and responsible technology use). This partnership helps ensure the library's learning opportunities are visible and accessible to students who may not otherwise hear about them.

Phase 1: Preparation, Coordination, and Setup (Months 1-3)

During the opening months of the project, the Wyandotte Nation Library will focus on preparation and coordination. Under the leadership of Librarian Madaline Harnar, the library will acquire recording equipment, instructional tools, and educational resources needed to support oral history, digital storytelling, media literacy, and technology-based learning. This includes portable audio recorders, microphones, headphones, and audio interface equipment, and

related accessories needed to support both individual and multi-participant recording activities, along with instructional subscriptions and digital tools that support storytelling, media literacy, and responsible technology use. In addition to equipment acquisition and program setup, Librarian Harnar will dedicate approximately 50% of her time to the planning, coordination, and delivery of Stories Forward activities throughout the project period. This includes development, participant support, coordination with students and staff, documentation of activities, and ongoing adjustment of programming based on participation and feedback. This level of effort reflects the hands-on nature of the project and the central role of the library in implementation.

During this preparation phase, Librarian Harnar will also participate in professional development opportunities to strengthen program delivery and sustainability. This may include attendance at national or regional library conferences where sessions on student programming, digital storytelling, media literacy, and emerging technologies are offered, along with the programs IMLS Designated Meeting. Knowledge gained through these professional development trainings and meetings will be applied directly to Stories Forward programming and shared internally.

At the same time, Librarian Harnar will coordinate with Education and Workforce Development Director Cristi Hudson to align project activities with existing student and education initiatives and to ensure scheduling fits within the library's regular hours and staffing capacity. Director Hudson will dedicate approximately 5% of her time to supervisory oversight, coordination with the library, and completion of required programmatic reporting, ensuring alignment with broader education and workforce priorities while remaining appropriate to the project's scope.

Wyandotte Nation Controller Eric Fonseca will complete required financial reporting and will conduct quarterly financial reviews with the project staff and Wyandotte Nation leadership to confirm spending is aligned with the approved budget, costs are properly documented, and the project remains on track.

Holly Hilliard, Wyandotte Nation Youth Coordinator, will assist with identifying participants through her existing youth group and will help plan age-appropriate activities that allow teens to support younger participants.

This first phase will also include designating library spaces for recording and instruction, developing basic activity outlines, and establishing a realistic program calendar. By the end of Phase 1, the library will be ready to begin hands-on programming without disrupting ongoing library services.

Phase 2: Pilot Programming and Skill-Building (Months 4-9)

Once foundational preparation is complete, the library will begin pilot programming focused on participant engagement. Initial activities will include small-group storytelling and interview workshops where participants learn how to ask questions, listen actively, and record short interviews with peers, family members, or trusted community members. These early sessions will emphasize comfort with equipment, respectful storytelling, and basic communication skills. The use of project recording equipment will allow multiple participants to record simultaneously, supporting interview-style activities, peer discussions, and collaborative storytelling.

Teens from Holly Hilliard's youth group will be intentionally involved during this phase as peer helpers, assisting younger children during introductory activities such as practicing interview questions or learning how to use recording devices. This mirrors existing youth dynamics within the community and provides teens with leadership and mentoring experience while remaining under staff supervision.

Students who assist younger participants will receive community service credit, along with certificates of achievement or recognition issued by the Project Director, reinforcing leadership development and community contribution.

Stakeholder input will continue throughout implementation. Library staff will use feedback from early sessions to refine pacing, group size, and instructional methods before expanding programming. After each workshop series or monthly set of sessions, the Project Coordinator will capture brief participant and caregiver feedback and Holly Hilliard will provide practical input on group readiness and engagement. This feedback will be used to adjust lesson pacing, session formats, and the balance of storytelling, technology practice, and life-skills activities.

Phase 3: Expanded Programming and Community Storytelling (Months 10-21)

Building on lessons learned during the pilot phase, the Wyandotte Nation's project will expand into regularly scheduled programming that includes youth and teen storytelling workshops, oral history activities, media literacy instruction, interview preparation, and guided exploration of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, for education and creative use.

AI-related instruction will be explicitly framed around responsible and ethical use – how to ask better questions, verify information, avoid plagiarism, recognize manipulated or misleading content, and understand when AI tools should not be used.

As programming expands, the library will also incorporate workforce and postsecondary readiness activities that reflect skills students are already practicing through storytelling and communication work. During summer months, the Wyandotte Nation Library will coordinate with the Tribe's existing summer internship program for high school and college students. Interns participating in the tribal program may engage in selected Stories Forward activities, including mock interviews, communication exercises, and financial literacy discussions, providing them with additional opportunities to practice workplace communication and professional development skills. These activities will include résumé-building workshops focused on clear writing and self-presentation; mock interviews that build confidence in speaking, listening, and responding thoughtfully, occasionally facilitated by tribal staff involved in hiring, tribal elders, and local business leaders who can provide real-world perspective on workplace communication and professional expectations.

Rather than operating as a standalone workforce program, the proposed activities will be integrated into existing storytelling and communication sessions so participants can apply skills in realistic and supportive settings. Where appropriate, the Wyandotte Nation Library will also coordinate with the Wyandotte Public School system to reinforce learning connections and share information about library programming opportunities. This coordination is intended to

complement, not duplicate, school-based instruction by positioning the library as an accessible extension of students' learning environment outside of the school day. For example, students may practice describing their experiences through interviews or presenting personal projects in ways that mirror real-world conversations they will encounter in academic or work environments. This approach allows the Wyandotte Nation Library to support readiness for future education and employment while remaining grounded in learning, communication, and library-based instruction.

Participants will engage in recording longer-form interviews and stories that reflect family experiences, community life, and the Wyandotte Nation's enduring journey – from its Upper Great Lakes origins, through generations of relocation, to its present-day home in northeastern Oklahoma. Elders and other community members will be invited to participate as interview subjects or guest contributors when appropriate, reinforcing intergenerational learning without placing undue demands on any group while simultaneously memorializing and underscoring the Tribe's place within America's ongoing story.

Throughout this phase, Librarian Harnar will coordinate programming and resource use, Director Hudson will provide supervisory oversight and ensure alignment with broader education goals, and Youth Coordinator Hilliard will continue outreach to youth participants and assist with session facilitation. As part of her dedicated project time, Librarian Harnar will oversee participant scheduling, equipment uses, workshop facilitation, and documentation of participant work products to ensure that Stories Forward activities remain integrated into the library's regular operations.

Programming will occur on an ongoing basis throughout the project period as part of the Wyandotte Nation Library's regular programming schedule, with participation levels varying based on community interest, seasonal programming opportunities, and coordination with existing youth activities.

Phase 4: Sharing Results and Project Closeout (Months 22-24)

As the project period approaches closeout, the library will focus on sharing results in tangible, locally meaningful ways. Participant-created stories and project highlights will be shared through multiple channels, including on the Wyandotte Nation website and social media platforms, along with The Turtle Speaks, the Wyandotte Nation's quarterly newsletter.

The library will also develop a simple printed brochure or display that highlights Stories Forward activities, participation, and examples of learning outcomes. These materials will be made available at the Wyandotte Nation Library, the Title VI Center where elders and tribal citizens regularly dine, the community center, and other tribal facilities where families gather. All printed and digital materials will include acknowledgment of funding support provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Within the community, project activities and results will be shared through events such as the Wyandotte Nation Annual Meeting, which will allow participants and families to see their work showcased in familiar settings.

Internally, the library will share project summaries with tribal leadership and staff to inform future planning and identify opportunities to sustain or expand successful activities beyond the grant period.

By the end of the project, the Wyandotte Nation will document key activities, participation levels, and implementation lessons learned. This documentation will support continued learning, provide a reference for future programming, and ensure that the project's impact extends beyond the grant period.

Project Results

Stories Forward is designed to produce results that are both tangible and meaningful for the Wyandotte Nation community while strengthening the Wyandotte Nation Library's capacity to deliver skills-based programming. The project responds directly to the need for accessible, skills-based learning opportunities by ensuring that participation leads to measurable growth in communication, media literacy, and practical life skills, rather than one-time experiences.

As the project progresses, student participants will develop increased confidence in expressing ideas, asking questions, and sharing stories through interviews, oral histories, and digital storytelling activities. Participants will also create a range of learning products appropriate to their age and experience, including short audio or written storytelling pieces. These products are not intended to be polished publications; instead, they serve as evidence of learning and practice, allowing students and other participants to build skills in a supportive environment where experimentation and growth are encouraged.

As participants build confidence in storytelling and communication, select project activities will culminate in opportunities to share work in familiar community settings. By helping participants document and share stories from their families and community, the project also contributes to the preservation of local knowledge and lived experiences while strengthening the Wyandotte Nation Library's role as a place where community history, communication skills, and modern technology intersect.

When appropriate, the library plans to showcase elements of Stories Forward during existing community events, such as National Night Out, which draws families, youth, and elders each year in Wyandotte. These opportunities allow students to practice presenting their work publicly, share stories in age-appropriate ways, and connect library learning to broader community life without creating standalone events. In this context, Stories Forward activities help reinforce the Wyandotte Nation's historical and ongoing contributions within America's shared civic and cultural story.

In addition to storytelling activities, the project will produce applied learning outcomes tied to preparation for postsecondary education and work. Teens will participate in résumé-building exercises focused on written communication and self-presentation, mock interviews that strengthen listening and speaking skills, and budgeting activities that introduce practical financial concepts.

Success for the project will be defined by consistent participation, demonstrated skill development, and sustained engagement with library services, with most participants expected to return for multiple sessions. These expectations are based on existing library participation patterns. Over the 24-month project period, the Wyandotte Nation Library anticipates ongoing participation from youth and teens engaged in library programming, with many participants returning for multiple activities as part of the library's regular schedule.

Program activities such as résumé building, mock interviews, and job-readiness discussions will primarily involve older youth participants involved in existing youth programs, including those participating in tribal summer internships.

Library staff will track attendance and participation, document completed activities, and observe changes in participant confidence, communication ability, and comfort using library resources and technology. Completion of applied learning activities – such as résumé drafts, mock interview participation, or budgeting exercises – will serve as an additional indicator that the project is meeting its intended goals.

The evaluation methods utilized are intentionally practical and appropriate for a small rural library. Rather than relying on complex external tools, staff will use attendance records, program documentation, review of participant-created work, and informal feedback from youth and caregivers to assess whether activities are addressing the learning needs identified. These methods allow the library to adjust programming as needed while keeping evaluation integrated into day-to-day operations.

Sharing results in familiar physical locations ensures that community members can see and understand the project's impact even if they do not regularly access online platforms.

Within the library itself, project activities and outcomes will be visible through ongoing programs and displays that recognize participant effort and learning.

The benefits of Stories Forward will extend beyond the grant period by strengthening systems rather than creating stand-alone activities. Equipment and instructional tools purchased through the project will remain available for future library programming, and staff experience gained during implementation will allow the library to continue offering storytelling, communication, and life-skills activities as part of its regular schedule. This ensures project activities can continue beyond the project period as part of the library's regular programming without requiring additional external funding. By embedding activities into existing services and maintaining coordination with tribal education and youth programs, the project remains operationally sustainable and scalable while continuing to provide accessible, skills-based learning opportunities.

Wyandotte Nation
NAG-ENHANCEMENT-FY26

Schedule of Completion – Project Year 1

October 1, 2026 – September 30, 2027

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Wyandotte Nation
NAG-ENHANCEMENT-FY26
Schedule of Completion – Project Year 2
October 1, 2027 – September 30, 2028

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