



NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Sample Application NAE-260932-OLS-26

Comanche Indian Tribe

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$149,990

The Comanche Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office will establish the "Taa Numu Suabetaiu": Our Comanche Knowledge- Comanche Nation Digital Cultural Heritage Portal, a Tribally sovereign, publicly accessible digital archive built on the Mukurtu Content Management System. The portal will be a Tribally curated, browsable archive of Comanche photographs, documents, oral histories, cultural objects, and language materials. Funds will support the deployment of Mukurtu CMS, digitization of the archival holdings, oral history collection with elders and other cultural knowledge holders, staff training in digital preservation, and community outreach. The project will provide direct benefit to Tribal members and the surrounding community.

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.

COMANCHE NATION

"Taa Numu Suabetaiu": Our Comanche Knowledge Comanche Nation Digital Cultural Heritage Portal

TRIBAL PROFILE | IMLS Native American Library Services Enhancement Grant

17,000+

Enrolled Members

~7,000

Reside in Tribal Area

1966

Year Federally
Recognized

8

Counties Served

Lawton, OK

Established Nation HQ

WHO WE ARE

The Comanche Nation — Numunuu, meaning "The People" — is a federally recognized sovereign nation headquartered in Lawton, Oklahoma. Originally part of the Wyoming Shoshone, the Comanche migrated southward to the Great Plains in the early 1700s, becoming one of the most powerful and influential nations in North American history, commanding a territory known as Comancheria spanning over 200,000 square miles.

Today, the Comanche Nation has more than 17,000 enrolled citizens, with approximately 7,000 residing in the tribal jurisdictional area encompassing Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, and Tillman Counties in southwestern Oklahoma. The Nation maintains a constitutional government with a Tribal Council composed of all enrolled members over 18.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Comanche culture centers on deep oral traditions, language preservation, horsemanship, and spiritual practices rooted in the relationship between the people and the land. The Comanche language — a Uto-Aztecan language closely related to Shoshone — is a living language actively being revitalized by the Nation.

- Oral histories and traditional knowledge spanning centuries
- Annual Comanche Homecoming Powwow, held each July in Walters, OK
- Comanche National Museum and Cultural Center (est. 2007, Lawton)
- Active language revitalization programs and cultural practitioners
- Comanche Code Talkers legacy recognized in U.S. military history

ARCHIVE SERVICE

The Comanche Nation currently has limited archival services to its community including:

- Access to print and electronic media, research databases
- Reference desk services and community reading/study spaces
- Cultural programming for all ages through the Museum and Cultural Center
- Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) archival holdings

PROJECT VISION

The Comanche Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office seeks IMLS NAE funding to develop the Comanche Digital Cultural Heritage Database — a tribally controlled, community-centered digital archive modeled on collaborative portals such as the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal.

This database will aggregate, preserve, and provide culturally appropriate access to Comanche historical photographs, oral histories, language recordings, material culture documentation, and archival records currently dispersed across federal repositories, universities, and private collections.

COMMUNITY NEED

Critical Comanche cultural materials remain siloed across institutions including the Smithsonian, National Archives, Library of Congress, and university special collections — inaccessible to tribal citizens, educators, and researchers in forms that respect tribal sovereignty and cultural protocols.

- Language endangerment: Fewer than 25 fluent first-language speakers remain
- Oral histories of elders at urgent risk of irretrievable loss
- No centralized, tribally governed digital archive currently exists
- Limited community access to materials held by outside institutions
- Youth disconnected from primary-source cultural heritage materials

PROPOSED GRANT ACTIVITIES

Activities to be funded under this NAE Enhancement Grant include:

- Deployment of Mukurtu CMS or equivalent tribally controlled platform
- Digitization of THPO archival holdings and fragile physical materials
- Community outreach to identify and repatriate dispersed digital records
- Oral history collection with fluent elders and cultural knowledge holders
- Staff training in digital preservation and metadata standards
- Educational programming connecting youth with digitized heritage

COMANCHE NATION

Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO)

IMLS Native American Library Services Enhancement Grant — FY 2026
Project Narrative | Funding Opportunity Number: NAG-ENHANCEMENT-FY26

Project Title	"Taa Numu Suabetaiy": Our Comanche Knowledge Comanche Nation Digital Cultural Heritage Portal
Applicant	Comanche Nation, Lawton, Oklahoma
Implementing Dept.	Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO)
Program Objective	Objective 3 — Provide Access to and Preservation of Information and Collections
Funding Request	\$150,000 (two-year project)
Project Period	October 1, 2026 – September 30, 2028
Cost Share	None requested

I. Project Justification

A. The Need: A Nation's Heritage in Danger of Being Lost

The Comanche Nation is one of the most historically significant Indigenous nations in North America. At the height of Comanche power, the Nʉmʉnʉ — 'the People' — commanded more than 240,000 square miles of the Southern Plains known as Comancheria, shaping the political, economic, and cultural landscape of the American Southwest for over two centuries. Today, the Comanche Nation is a federally recognized tribe headquartered in Lawton, Oklahoma, with more than 17,000 enrolled citizens across the country.

Despite this rich heritage, an urgent preservation crisis exists. The vast majority of primary source materials documenting Comanche history, language, material culture, oral traditions, and ceremonial life are held not by the Comanche Nation itself, but by external institutions — federal repositories, university archives, state historical societies, and private collections. These materials were collected during the 19th and 20th centuries, largely without the free, prior, and informed consent of Comanche community members, and they carry metadata that is frequently incomplete, inaccurate, culturally insensitive, or stripped of its original context.

The Comanche Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) serves as the Nation's principal steward of cultural heritage, managing sacred site protection, repatriation under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), consultation with federal agencies, and the preservation of archival collections. The THPO maintains a growing archive of photographs, documents, oral history recordings, cultural records, and language materials. However, the office currently lacks a digitally accessible, tribally controlled platform through which these materials — and the many materials held elsewhere — can be organized, protected, and made available to Comanche citizens, scholars, and future generations according to Comanche cultural protocols.

KEY PROBLEM	Comanche cultural materials are scattered across dozens of external repositories. The Nation has no centralized, tribally sovereign digital archive
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that reflects Comanche voices, applies Comanche cultural protocols, and provides community-controlled access to its own heritage.

B. How the Need Was Identified

This need has been identified through the THPO's sustained engagement with community members, elders, language specialists, and cultural practitioners. During consultations conducted in connection with ongoing NAGPRA repatriation efforts and Section 106 reviews, Comanche citizens and elders have consistently expressed a desire for a place to access and contribute to the documentation of their own history — on their own terms. Requests from teachers at tribal schools, parents, language learners, and researchers within the community have reinforced the urgency of this need.

Additionally, the THPO has reviewed best practices in tribal digital archiving, including the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal developed by Washington State University and tribal nations of the Columbia Plateau, which demonstrates the powerful impact a Mukurtu CMS-based portal can have for Indigenous communities seeking to curate their own cultural heritage with granular cultural protocols, community records, and Traditional Knowledge Labels. The Comanche Nation seeks to establish a comparable tribally sovereign portal tailored specifically to Nʉmən̄n̄ history, knowledge, and values as the “Taa Numu Suabetaiu”: Our Comanche Knowledge Portal.

C. Primary Audience

The primary audience for the Comanche Nation Digital Cultural Heritage Portal includes:

- Comanche Nation enrolled citizens of all ages, particularly youth and young adults seeking to connect with their cultural heritage
- Comanche elders and cultural practitioners who will serve as knowledge contributors and protocol advisors
- Language learners and Comanche language program participants
- Tribal educators and school librarians serving Comanche students at BIE schools and public schools near Lawton, Oklahoma
- THPO staff and tribal departments that rely on archival materials for repatriation, consultation, and heritage planning
- Researchers and partner institutions engaged in the ethical stewardship of Comanche collections

Community members, including elders, THPO staff, and tribal program coordinators, have been involved in the planning of this project through internal consultations and the THPO's ongoing advisory relationships. This application reflects their expressed priorities: a portal that belongs to the Comanche Nation, protects sensitive materials from inappropriate public access, and centers Comanche voices in the description and interpretation of Comanche heritage.

II. Project Work Plan

A. Project Overview: The Comanche Nation Mukurtu CMS Portal

This project will establish the “Taa Numu Suabetaiu”: Our Comanche Knowledge-Comanche Nation Digital Cultural Heritage Portal — a tribally sovereign, publicly accessible (with culturally tiered access) digital archive built on the Mukurtu Content Management System (CMS). Mukurtu is a free, open-source platform developed at Washington State University's Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC) and built in direct collaboration with Indigenous communities worldwide. It is the gold standard for tribal digital archiving because it is the only platform purpose-built

to incorporate cultural protocols, Traditional Knowledge (TK) Labels, community records, and differential access controls that reflect Indigenous governance values.

Modeled in part on the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal — a nationally recognized Mukurtu implementation serving eight tribal nations of the Columbia Plateau — the Comanche Nation portal will provide:

- A tribally curated, browsable archive of Comanche photographs, documents, oral histories, cultural objects, and language materials.
- Culturally defined access tiers, allowing some materials to be broadly accessible while protecting sensitive ceremonial or restricted materials for appropriate audiences only.
- Traditional Knowledge Labels that communicate Comanche cultural protocols for the use and attribution of digitized heritage materials.
- Community Records fields that allow Comanche elders, knowledge keepers, and community members to add cultural narratives, correct historical inaccuracies, and provide Comanche-language context alongside standard archival metadata.
- A Comanche language dictionary module to support ongoing language revitalization efforts
- A browsable category structure organized around Comanche cultural frameworks, not Western archival taxonomies.

B. Project Activities and Sequence

Year One (October 2026 – September 2027)

Activity 1: Platform Setup and Technical Infrastructure (Months 1–3). The THPO will procure hosting services and install Mukurtu CMS, working with a qualified Mukurtu implementation specialist or the WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation. The platform will be configured to reflect Comanche Nation governance structures/Tribal Departments, establishing community groups, cultural protocols, and access tiers in consultation with a Comanche Cultural Advisory Committee. The THPO will convene a standing advisory committee of Comanche elders, cultural practitioners, language specialists, and enrolled community members. This committee will guide all decisions about cultural access protocols, Traditional Knowledge Label designations, content categories, and community curation priorities. Their authority over the portal's cultural governance structure is central to the project's integrity. Begin hosting the "Taa Numu Suabetaiu": Our Comanche Knowledge Campaign during the Comanche Nation Fair, October 1-4, 2026 with an information booth. We could have flyers with QR Codes to submit donations forms with information tribal citizens submissions. The "Taa Numu Suabetaiu": Our Comanche Knowledge Information Booth should have a schedule of community outreach events, demonstration of the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal and questionnaires survey.

Activity 2: Staff Training on Mukurtu CMS (Months 2–4). THPO staff, Comanche National Tribal Departments and designated community curators will receive training in Mukurtu CMS administration, content upload, metadata standards, and protocol management. Training will be provided through a combination of WSU CDSC online resources, the Sustainable Heritage Network training modules, and potential on-site technical assistance. The Comanche Nation would also like to host an online training with the Nimiipuu: Nez Perce Tribe and Umatilla Tribes to seek assistance and guidance.

Activity 3: Collection Assessment and Digitization Priority List (Months 2–5). The THPO will conduct a systematic inventory of existing archival holdings within the THPO and identify priority collections for initial digitization and upload. In parallel, staff will conduct an environmental scan of external repositories — including Smithsonian National Anthropological Archives, University of Oklahoma Western History Collections, Great Plains Museum. Fort Sill Museum, Oklahoma Historical

Society, etc. — to identify Comanche materials held elsewhere that could be digitally repatriated to the portal through partnership agreements.

Activity 4: Digitization of Priority Collections (Months 4–10). Using IMLS-funded equipment (flatbed scanner, audio workstation, external storage), THPO staff will digitize priority photographs, documents, and oral history recordings from the THPO's existing holdings. All digitization will follow Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) standards. Metadata will be created using Dublin Core standards, with additional Comanche-specific cultural narrative fields populated in consultation with the Comanche Cultural Advisory Committee.

Activity 5: Portal Design and Content Population (Months 5–12). Working with the Advisory Committee, THPO staff will design the portal's category browse structure to reflect Comanche cultural knowledge frameworks — organizing materials by cultural theme, time period, community, and media type in a way that is intuitive and meaningful to Comanche users. An initial collection of goal of 500 digitized items will be uploaded, described, and assigned appropriate cultural protocols before the portal's soft launch for the Comanche Nation Fair 2027.

Year Two (October 2027 – September 2028)

Activity 6: Community Outreach and Portal Launch (Months 13–15). The THPO will host community input sessions — at tribal headquarters, and 7 community centers, — to introduce the portal to community members, gather feedback, and build awareness. The “Taa Numu Suabetaiu”: Our Comanche Knowledge Portal will have a formal public launch event at the Comanche Nation Fair October 1, 2026 and launch the revealing during the 2027 Comanche Nation Fair.

Activity 7: Expand Collections and Digital Repatriation Agreements (Months 13–20). Building on the institutional scan completed in Year One, THPO staff and the Project Director will negotiate Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs) or digital access agreements with external repositories to enable the addition of digitally repatriated Comanche materials to the portal. “Taa Numu Suabetaiu”: Our Comanche Knowledge Campaign will be working with the NAGPRA Department, and THPO to seek universities and museums with Comanche Items, artifacts, research materials, recordings, etc. to build a relationship to obtain rights to share with the portal.

Activity 8: Language Module Development (Months 14–22). In partnership with the Comanche Nation Language Department, the THPO will develop a Comanche language dictionary module within Mukurtu CMS, adding language materials, audio recordings of Comanche words and phrases, and contextual cultural information.

Activity 9: Staff and Volunteer Curation Training (Months 15–22). The THPO will offer a series of community curation workshops, training interested Comanche citizens — particularly youth and young adults — to contribute community records, cultural narratives, and Traditional Knowledge annotations to the portal. This builds long-term community capacity and ensures the portal grows beyond the grant period.

Activity 10: Final Evaluation, Sustainability Planning, and Dissemination (Months 22–24). The Project Director will compile a final evaluation report measuring outcomes against the Performance Measurement Plan. The THPO will develop a sustainability plan for portal hosting, staffing, and ongoing

curation beyond the grant period. Results will be presented at a tribal community meeting and shared with IMLS, the Mukurtu CMS community, and regional tribal preservation networks.

C. Key Personnel

[PLACEHOLDER: Insert names and brief bios. The following are suggested roles — confirm actual staff.]

- Martina Minthorn: Project Director — Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO). Responsible for overall project management, budget oversight, “Taa Numu Suabetaiu”: Our Comanche Knowledge Advisory Committee coordination, and reporting to IMLS.
- Hired Position: Digital Archivist / Mukurtu Administrator — THPO staff member responsible for platform administration, digitization, metadata creation, and content upload.
- Danna Key: Cultural Liaison / Community Coordinator — Comanche cultural practitioner or THPO staff member who maintains the relationship with the Advisory Committee and facilitates community outreach.
- Dr. Kim Christen: Mukurtu Technical Consultant — Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation at Washington State University. Dr. Christen is a certified Mukurtu implementation specialist for initial platform installation, configuration, and training.

D. Existing Resources and Partnerships

The Comanche Nation THPO brings significant existing assets to this project:

- Comanche Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office with 7 Comanche Nation Tribal Department to assist with the “Taa Numu Suabetaiu”: Our Comanche Knowledge,
- Comanche Nation Information Technology Department: infrastructure — computers, servers, internet access at THPO.
- Oklahoma Historical Society, University of Oklahoma, Smithsonian, Great Plains Museum, Kiowa, Comanche Apache Land Use Committee, Fort Sill Indian School Alumni, etc.

The Comanche Nation will leverage the free, open-source Mukurtu CMS platform — at no licensing cost — and the publicly available training resources of WSU's Sustainable Heritage Network to maximize the impact of IMLS funds.

E. Stakeholder Involvement and Communication

Stakeholders have been involved in the development of this project through:

- The Comanche Nation THPO will have a legal review of all forms and also with the Comanche Nation Business Committee, and outreach events in seven (7) Comanche Communities.
- Ongoing consultations with Comanche elders and cultural practitioners through the THPO's NAGPRA and Section 106 consultation processes
- Input from tribal educators and the Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee

Results and lessons learned will be communicated through: quarterly reports to tribal leadership; community presentations at Comanche Nation events; a final public portal launch; sharing with the Mukurtu CMS user community and regional tribal archivists' networks; and the IMLS final performance report.

III. Project Results

A. Intended Results and Products

By the conclusion of the 24-month project period, the Comanche Nation will have achieved the following results:

- A fully operational Comanche Nation Digital Cultural Heritage Portal built on Mukurtu CMS, publicly accessible with tiered cultural protocols
- An initial collection of 1,500 digitized items — photographs, documents, oral history recordings, and cultural materials — uploaded, described with culturally appropriate metadata, and made accessible through the portal
- A Comanche cultural protocol framework within Mukurtu, defining community groups, access tiers, and Traditional Knowledge Label designations appropriate to Comanche governance values
- A Comanche language dictionary module within the portal, supporting language revitalization
- A Goal of 15 institutional partnerships or MOAs with external repositories holding Comanche materials, enabling digital repatriation
- A Goal of 15 Comanche citizens trained as community curators capable of contributing to the portal on an ongoing basis
- A long-term sustainability plan for portal operations and continued collection growth

These results directly address the identified need: Comanche citizens and the broader public will have access to a tribally sovereign, culturally governed digital archive that reflects Comanche history and knowledge in Comanche terms — for the first time.

B. Defining and Measuring Success

Success will be evaluated through the following measures, tracked via the Performance Measurement Plan:

- Effectiveness: Percentage of planned items digitized and uploaded; number of community records and cultural narratives added; number of Traditional Knowledge Labels applied; number of MOAs or digital access agreements executed
- Quality: Feedback from the Cultural Advisory Committee and community members on the cultural appropriateness, usability, and accuracy of the portal's content and design; results of a brief community satisfaction survey administered at the portal launch
- Timeliness: Completion of each activity within the proposed Schedule of Completion

C. Availability and Accessibility

The Comanche Nation Digital Cultural Heritage Portal will be accessible via the internet to all enrolled Comanche citizens and to the general public, subject to cultural access tier restrictions set by the Comanche Cultural Advisory Committee. The portal URL will be shared through the Comanche Nation website, tribal newsletter, social media channels, and community outreach events. The portal will be mobile-responsive, consistent with Mukurtu CMS's built-in mobile accessibility.

Materials identified by the Advisory Committee as sensitive or restricted will be accessible only to authenticated community members with appropriate permissions — a core feature of the Mukurtu CMS platform's cultural protocol system. This ensures that the Comanche Nation retains sovereign control over its most sacred materials while making appropriate materials available to the broader community and public.

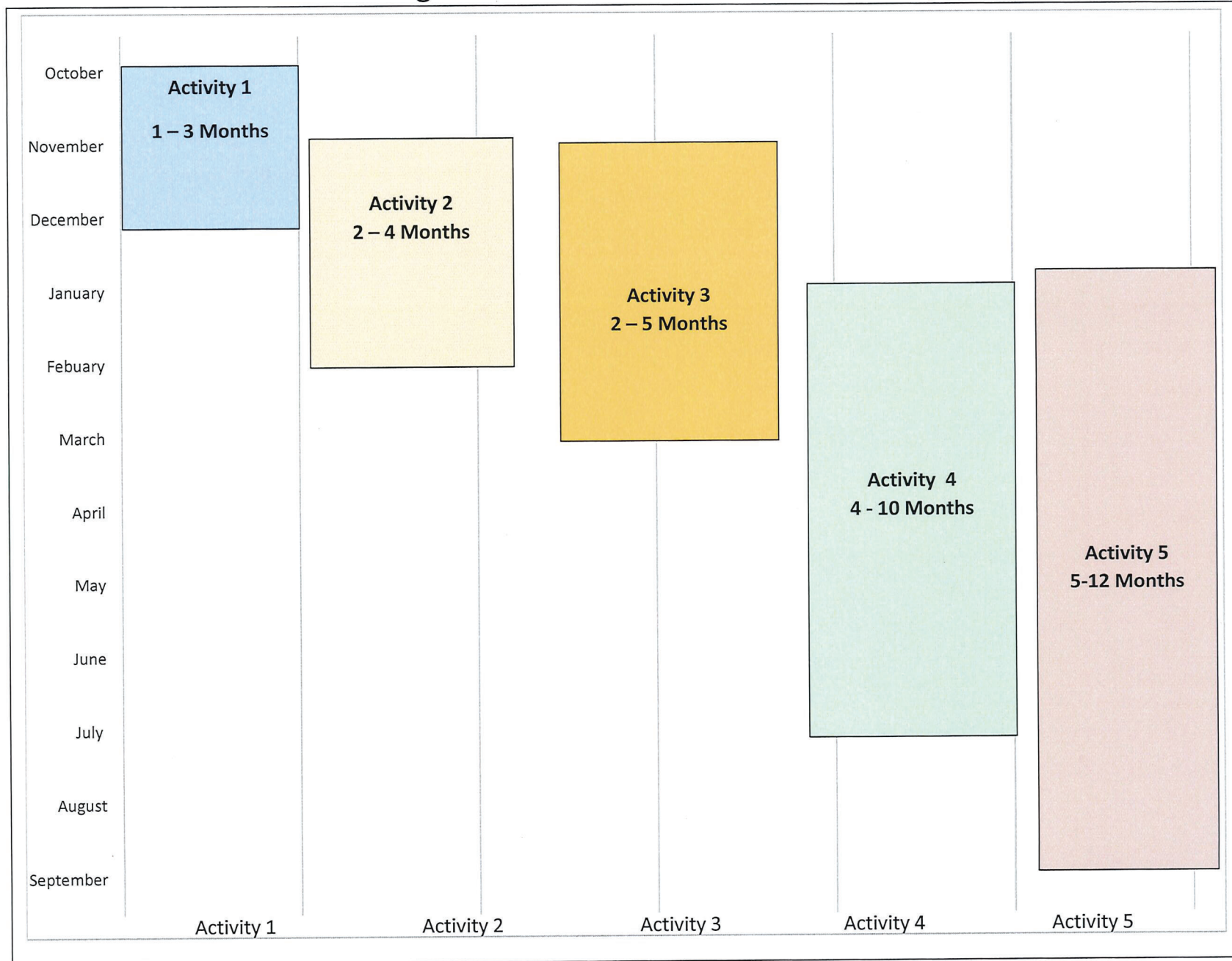
D. Sustaining Benefits Beyond the Grant Period

The Comanche Nation is committed to sustaining the “Taa Numu Suabetaiu”: Our Comanche Knowledge Portal beyond the conclusion of the IMLS grant period. Sustainability will be supported through:

- Integration of portal administration into the ongoing responsibilities of THPO staff
- Low ongoing hosting costs enabled by Mukurtu's open-source architecture.
- A sustainability plan developed in the final six months of the project outlining staffing, hosting, and content growth commitments
- Ongoing community curation training that distributes the burden of content growth across a broader base of trained community volunteers
- Continued pursuit of supplemental funding through tribal budget processes and future grant opportunities

The Comanche Nation views the “Taa Numu Suabetaiu”: Our Comanche Knowledge Portal not as a two-year project but as a permanent, living archive — a digital dilly bag, in the spirit of the Mukurtu name — in which Comanche history, knowledge, and culture can be safely kept, shared on the Nation's own terms, and passed on to future generations of Nʉmʉnʉ.

“Taa Numu Suabetaiu”: Our Comanche Knowledge Archives Digital Portal – 2026 Schedule of Completion



“Taa Numu Suabetaiu”: Our Comanche Knowledge Archives Digital Portal – 2027 Schedule of Completion

