



NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Sample Application NAE-260946-OLS-26

Port Graham Village Council

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$127,306

Port Graham Village Council, in collaboration with the Kenai Peninsula College Adult Education Department and Project GRAD, will improve digital resources at the library, enhance access, and provide digital literacy education within their community. Port Graham is a remote Alaska Native village accessible only by plane or boat. Project staff will purchase technology and equipment enabling the library to offer remote and in-person digital literacy classes, and a mobile and ADA-compliant access ramp for the entrance to the library. Programming will focus on postsecondary readiness, digital literacy, and life skills. Additional topics include basic computer operations, software applications such as word processing, an introduction to the Google Suite, information literacy, and online safety. This project will benefit village Elders and high school students in particular.

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 Native Village of Port Graham, also known as Paluwik, is a federally recognized Alaska Native Tribe on the southern Kenai Peninsula in Southcentral Alaska. This Sugpiaq community can be accessed by boat or air only; there is no road system that connects the 162 residents with the rest of the state. A subsistence lifestyle is strongly practiced and connects the people with their traditional lifeways and culture.

Tribal governance is administered and managed by a First Chief, who works closely with a tribal administrator, the Second Chief and the Port Graham Village Council. The Village Council is comprised of five elected members, and the council operates under a constitution and bylaws. The council maintains and manages a community center, tribal offices a library and other facilities, and provides essential services for the community. The Port Graham village library was established in 1988 and has operated on a part-time basis, open to all community members year-round during open hours. In 2023, Port Graham Village Council created a small computer lab at the library equipped with 6 Chromebook laptops. The library also offers free Wifi.

Data from the US Census Bureau estimated 27 households and 21 families in Port Graham as of 2024. Although 80% of households have some form of internet access, digital literacy is very low. The data also estimates a median household income just over \$45,000 per year: nearly half the national average. In addition, approximately half of all residents live below federal poverty guidelines.

The work of this 2-year grant project will be carried out by the Project Director (tribal administrator Fran Norman), Port Graham's librarian Bobby-Wu Smith, and subawards with Kenai Peninsula College Adult Education Department and Project GRAD, which will provide digital literacy classes.

Project Justification

Current need, challenge, or opportunity and how it was identified:

Port Graham is a remote Alaska Native village comprised almost entirely of Sugpiaq tribal members. Access to the village is by boat or air only; there is no road system that connects the 162 community members with the rest of the state.

The village has a tribal library equipped with a small computer lab and free Wifi. Since establishing the library computer lab in 2023, tribal officials have noticed it is not being used to its full capacity. After informal discussions with community members, tribal leadership has identified two primary needs: Improved digital equipment and access to that equipment, and education about how to effectively and safely navigate online spaces.

In particular, the library is under-utilized by two groups who could most benefit from its digital resources: Elders and high school students.

- **Elders in Port Graham** – like many older Americans – report struggling to use digital devices to access information and services online. This became clear when the Kenai Peninsula College Adult Education department hosted several classes for older adults in 2024-2025 and spoke to Elders about their needs (funding for village travel under this project ended last year).

This is a big problem, especially now that personal medical information is increasingly available only through online portals, which is also how patients are often required to communicate with physicians. (Worth noting: In Port Graham, a visit to a medical facility requires a flight on a small plane or catching a boat.) Struggles with online tasks such as navigating tabs or using Zoom are not just frustrating, they prevent Elders from performing essential tasks and can be socially isolating. Lack of basic digital literacy knowledge can leave Elders vulnerable to identity theft, fraud or misinformation.

A study released in JMIR Publications noted that many older adults lack sufficient social support from family, friends, or community services, which exacerbates their digital literacy challenges.

It might not be surprising, but younger or more tech-savvy family members are not always the most helpful for this situation, “as negative interactions, such as lack of patience, can reinforce feelings of inadequacy and discourage use,” (Khan S, et. Al. “Key Challenges and Barriers to Digital Literacy for Older Adults: Scoping Review0”. JMIR Aging. 2026 Mar 16).

There are physical issues as well – from dexterity issues around touch screens or visual impairment, to the physical challenges of getting to the library’s computer resources. Adult education classes in Port Graham that have aimed to help Elders use their devices have been warmly received by this group, but the room large enough to hold classes lacks ramp access in winter, making it difficult for Elders with mobility issues to enter. Also, the room lacks adequate seating and desk space. The room needs a large enough monitor that instructors can use it for

presenting information and students can utilize the space for vocational trainings or remote interviews.

• **High school students in Port Graham** are typically eager adopters of new technology, but educators working directly with this group report a need for more digital life skills, as well as ability to use evolving tools such as AI. Lack of digital literacy has an impact on young people's success in navigating tasks such as researching post-secondary education offerings or job trainings. Lack of basic software such as Microsoft Word can impact their ability to apply for work or participate in remote classes. At worst, lack of digital literacy and knowledge of safe practices can make rural youth the target of exploitation online or other crimes, a trend that was the subject of a 2022 investigation by Alaska Public Media ("New Alaska documentary examines dangers for teens online," APM, Feb. 4, 2022, shorturl.at/YPqTu).

Alaska Native youth navigate both the traditional and the modern world, and increasing confidence in online tools, including AI, will be critical to equip them for success and leadership.

Sources used to define the scope of this project:

In 2024-2025, the Kenai Peninsula College's Kachemak Bay Campus (KBC) Adult Education Department made several trips to Port Graham to teach computer skills. The group that turned out in the highest numbers for these classes was village Elders. According to Port Graham Chief Dannielle Malchoff and KBC Adult Education Coordinator Bridget Clark, the Elders were most interested in the following question: "How do I make this work?", often bringing their own iPad or laptop from home in hopes of solving a pernicious issue.

This demonstrated the important role the library can play to benefit their users and the wellness of the community. A 2023 policy paper out of APPTA in Canada that found that with "improved digital skills, older adults gain better access to essential information, including health care resources, and can strengthen their social ties, positively influencing their mental and emotional well-being. Additionally, engaging with ICT can stimulate cognition by offering access to games, news, and educational opportunities, which may help delay cognitive decline." ("Digital Literacy Interventions for Older Adults in Canada," APPTA 2022-2023. shorturl.at/S4gU1)

Chief Dannielle Malchoff reported high school students want to have a way to take practice tests online before getting a license, which led us to talk with Project GRAD, an educational non-profit that provides academic coaching at schools including Port Graham School. While there is academic coaching already available and village youth may feel very comfortable on digital devices, educators report a need for basic life skills that students will need to be successful after high school, especially given how remote Port Graham is. These skills include tasks such as resume writing, job searches, research on post-secondary education, applying for financial aid and responsible use of AI.

In addition to education, students were challenged by a lack of devices to work on as a group and basic software (Microsoft Office Suite). Elders reported difficulty gaining entry to the building

for the classes available and lack of appropriate seating or work space. Also, high school students need a place to work on these tasks in summer and on break, when the school library is not available.

Primary audience for the project and how they have been involved in the planning:

The primary audiences for the project are village Elders (age 65 and over) and village high school students. As of the 2020 census, this older population makes up about 17% of the total population of Port Graham; high school students were about 3%. About 5.4% of Port Graham residents have a Bachelor's degree or higher and there is a 41.5% unemployment rate. About 83% of the residents are American Indian/Alaska Native (2020 U.S. Census, [shorturl.at/xLUKL](https://www.census.gov/shorturl.at/xLUKL)).

This project is constructed to address feedback that Elders gave following a series of adult education classes delivered in 2024-2025 by the Kenai Peninsula College/Kachemak Bay Campus Adult Education Department, and also needs identified by the instructors. Our youth education component was created based on needs identified by parents and educators in the community, particularly counselors employed by Project GRAD, which provides academic coaching in Port Graham School.

Project Workplan

Month 1: Project kick-off and equipment purchase (Oct. 2026)

- The Project Director, Project GRAD, KBC and Port Graham library staff will confirm the project plan, roles and preliminary course outlines.
- Project Director will purchase equipment and supplies to improve access to library digital resources and for group classes.
- Project Director will finalize contract for mobile ramp signed and logistics for its delivery/installation.
- The Port Graham librarian will begin manning the library for 7 hours per week under the IMLS Enhancement grant.

Months 2-3: Fall semester (Nov.-Dec. 2026)

- The librarian will continue to staff the tribal library for 7 hours a week.
- iPads w/keyboards, Bluetooth headsets, a 65-inch monitor for class instruction, and chairs for the computer lab will be set up for public use at the library.
- Microsoft Office Suite will be installed on library laptops and iPads.
- KBC will travel to Port Graham four times to offer four-hour classes. These will be digital literacy/life skills classes for adult learners in the community. Topics will have flexibility to address the needs of the group, but some preliminary offerings may include: using Zoom or other applications to join meetings, how bookmarks work and how to make them, addressing questions around texting and other kinds of direct messaging.

As part of their initial class, KBC will administer an initial survey to evaluate skills levels, confidence in the subject matter and what they want to gain from the course/what questions they want answered.

- Project GRAD will travel to Port Graham four times to offer classes. These will be digital literacy / life skills classes for high school students in the community. Topics will be customized to the needs of the group, but some preliminary offerings could include: How to apply for a driver's license, the Alaska PFD other essential online tasks; how to run a job search; how to write a resume writing.

As part of their initial class, Project GRAD will survey the students about their skills and what they hope to gain from the course/what questions they want answered.

Months 4-8: Spring semester (Jan.-May 2027)

- The librarian will continue to staff the tribal library for 7 hours a week.
- Mobile safety ramp equipment will be set up at the group classroom entrance so Elders/people with mobility issues can access the classes.
- KBC will travel to Port Graham four times to offer four-hour digital literacy/life skills classes for adult learners in the community. KBC will survey students at the end of spring semester to evaluate skills improvement.
- Project GRAD will travel to Port Graham four times to offer digital literacy / life skills classes for high school students in the community. Project GRAD will survey students at the end of spring semester to evaluate skills improvement.

Months 9-11: Summer (June-August 2027)

- The librarian will continue to staff the tribal library for 7 hours a week.
- Project GRAD and KBC will report on data collected and survey results to the Project Director. The librarian will report on technology use and library use to the Project Director.

Months 13-15: Fall Year 2 (Sept.-Dec. 2027)

- The librarian will continue to staff the tribal library for 7 hours a week.
- KBC will travel to Port Graham four times to offer four-hour digital literacy/life skills classes for adult learners in the community.
- Project GRAD will travel to Port Graham four times to offer digital literacy / life skills classes for high school students in the community.

Months 16-20: Spring semester (Jan.-May, 2028)

- The librarian will continue to staff the tribal library for 7 hours a week.

- KBC will travel to Port Graham four times to offer four-hour digital literacy/life skills classes for adult learners in the community. KBC will survey students at the end of spring semester to evaluate skills improvement.
- Project GRAD will travel to Port Graham four times to offer digital literacy / life skills classes for high school students in the community. Project GRAD will survey students at the end of spring semester to evaluate skills improvement.

Months 21-23: Summer (June-Aug. 2028)

- The librarian will continue to staff the tribal library for 7 hours a week.
- Project GRAD and KBC will report on data collected and survey results, and final recommendations to the Project Director. The librarian will report on technology use and library foot traffic to the Project Director.

Months 24: Final report and grant closeout (Sept. 2028)

- The librarian will continue to staff the tribal library for 7 hours a week.
- The Project Director will deliver final report to the funding agency, First Chief and Tribal Council and close out any remaining grant requirement.

Key staff and activities:

- Project Director: Tribal Administrator Fran Norman will serve as Project Director. She will be responsible for project management, coordination with subawardees and contractors and project reporting.
- Librarian: Bobby-Wu Smith will serve as librarian at the Port Graham tribal library. He will work 7 hours a week for two years at the library under the IMLS Enhancement grant so that patrons can use the library.
- Adult Education: Bridget Clark is Adult Education Coordinator at Kachemak Bay Campus, Kenai Peninsula College. She will be responsible for executing a subaward that will include 16 adult education classes over two years to take place at the Port Graham tribal library for this project.
- Youth Education: Hayley Norris is Executive Director of Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula. She will be responsible for executing a subaward that will include 16 education classes over two years for high school students to take place at the Port Graham tribal library for this project.
- Ramp installation: Lenny DiPaolo is owner/founder of Kasilof Wood and Metal. His ADA-compliant metal ramps are designed for the unique conditions of rural Alaska and have been used in village throughout Alaska, including tribal senior centers. The ramps are modular for easy shipping/assembly and are mobile pieces of equipment that can be detached/attached to different structures. DiPaolo will also be responsible for transport/correct installation of ramp equipment.

Stakeholder planning and input:

Chief Dannielle Malchoff managed the installation of the computer lab at the library in 2023 and collected community feedback about further needs to make it more functional, including high quality headsets, comfortable chairs for seating, more workspaces and iPads that could be loaned out.

KBC held four adult education classes at the Port Graham library in 2024-2025. Chief Malchoff spoke with attendees about their experience in the class and what skills they wanted to continue improving. These observations are the foundation for curriculum outline and selection of KBC as a subawardee in this grant to increase digital literacy and aid Elders in using devices.

While the classes were well attended, access became an issue when Elders with mobility issues had difficulty accessing the classroom when it was icy in winter. This raised the issue of needing a ramp.

Project GRAD has been active in Port Graham school for the past year. Executive Director Hayley Norris and Deputy Director/Academic Coach Kenneth Schneider have broad experience working with high school students and have been able to tailor a program that leverages that experience and foundational relationships and build a curriculum based on needs identified by students, parents and teachers.

KBC and Project GRAD will survey participants at the beginning and middle of the project to assess stakeholder needs and interests. Community use will be tracked by the librarian and feedback will be solicited at tribal council meetings.

Existing assets, resources, and/or potential partners:

Existing resources include library space and a library computer lab equipped with six laptops. Partners: Subawardees KBC and Project GRAD have already established trust in the community and had successful programs in adult education and working with youth (respectively). These existing relationships will be an immense asset to this project which will aid in its success.

Sharing the work's results and lessons learned:

The findings of this project will be reported to the First Chief and the Port Graham Tribal Council. The report will include qualitative and quantitative findings about 1. the success of the project, as taken from responses to surveys and informal discussion; 2. Data on class participation. 3. Activities/curriculum people participated in through the classes; 4. Any increase in technology use as a result of improved accessibility and equipment; and 5. Any personal successes that library patrons reported.

Project results

Intended results and/or products:

Adult learners will show improved digital skills and confidence in their ability to use digital devices. If they report difficulty with using their own devices, they will have professional

educators available to adjust settings, etc. Adult learners will know how to recognize common scams and phishing attempts.

High School students will have used AI for projects such as searching for jobs or post-secondary education programs and scholarships. They will have completed license tests and prepared a resume. As they prepare for life after high school, they will have the digital literacy skills needed to navigate the adult world. They will be aware of common scams and online safety issues.

Adults and youth will be able to gain computer skills in a classroom equipped with adequate seating, workspaces and a large monitor for classroom presentations. In addition to the six laptops the library currently owns, students will be able to use iPads with keyboards and headsets to practice their skills and perform tasks.

How do you define success for the project, and how will it be evaluated?

We intend for two thirds of the adult population over age 65 to use the educational resources offered by this project and 100% of high school students over the course of the two years.

Digital literacy class participants will show a 75% improvement in digital skills, knowledge and confidence. Adult learners will be able to use at least two applications they did not use before (e.g. Zoom, Google Sheets, Canva, etc). High school students will have completed at least four real-life applications (a license test, school application, job resume, etc). We will have a 50% increase in the use of digital equipment at the library and foot traffic during library hours.

KBC and Project GRAD will survey class participants at the beginning, middle and end of the project to evaluate progress and track participation. This data will be reported to the Project Director. Technology use and foot traffic at the library will be tracked by the librarian; this information and the librarian's hours will be reported to the Project Director.

How results will be disseminated:

The Project Manager will compile a report of the findings of this project, which will be presented to the First Chief and the Port Graham Tribal Council. The report will include qualitative and quantitative findings about the project. The report will also be shared funders and with community members at the Port Graham Annual Meeting.

How we will sustain the benefits of the project beyond the period of performance:

The technology and equipment purchased as part of this grant will give Port Graham the capacity to offer more remote and in-person classes through the library, extending its educational and community wellness benefit. For example, KBC Adult Education Department offers free adult education classes, which residents will be able to take through the library using the large-screen monitor and class space. High students will be able to use the iPads and headsets for college applications or resumes or use the large screen for remote vocational training.

We will maintain the equipment with updates on a regular basis so that they continue to serve us for years after the project is completed.

Educational benefit: The goal of our digital literacy courses is in large part to teach people how to find reliable information online. As new technologies emerge or tech frustrations pop up, village residents will have the tools to answer their own questions, which will create more knowledge – in essence, a self-sustaining benefit.

Schedule of Completion

Year 1: Oct. 1, 2026-Sept. 30, 2027

[illegible]

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Year 2: Oct. 1, 2027-Sept. 30, 2028

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