



NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Sample Application NAE-260947-OLS-26

Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$116,361

The Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library will strengthen and expand library services for Soboba Tribal members and the surrounding community by increasing access to the library's collection through the ongoing inventory, cataloging, and reclassification of materials. The library will purchase cantilever bookcases and display cases to showcase the tribe's photographs and oral histories. Funds will support travel for its library staff to skill-enhancing professional development conferences. The project will provide direct benefit to the over 1,600 Soboba Tribal members and Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library staff.

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

Since time immemorial the descendants of the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians are those whom have lived on and occupied the land that is presently known as the cities of San Jacinto, Hemet, Valle Vista, and Winchester. Unique in their history, the Soboba Tribal members are descendants of both Luiseño and Cahuilla ancestry. Virtually self-sufficient prior to Mexican and American settlement, the Soboba people utilized the San Jacinto River, its tributary systems, and 40 perennial springs, to farm and live on the lands. Around 1815, Mission San Luis Rey established Rancho San Jacinto as their furthestmost cattle ranch, which encompassed the Soboba village. Mission San Luis Rey brought Luiseño peoples in as laborers to work on these ranchos. Seeing as there was already Cahuilla people inhabiting the area, many began to intermarry with the Luiseño people who were brought in. After the secularization of the missions in California, the San Jacinto Viejo was granted to Don Jose Antonio Estudillo in 1842, with a stipulation that the new land owner “shall not in any manner prejudice the Indians who are established on said land”. However, by 1880, the heirs of the Estudillo family had sold off most of the rancho lands, leaving the Soboba people with no claim to their land or water. On June 19, 1883, the Soboba Indian Reservation was established, a 3,172-acre tract, which included the Soboba village and the adjacent hills. Despite the reservation status, the Soboba people continued to fight for the land and water rights deep into the 1990s. In 1933, a tunnel was constructed, which would deplete much of the Tribe’s water supply, leaving many of the Soboba residents without for years and destroyed the last remnants of their once-flourishing agricultural economy. Together, this would lead to years of litigation between the Soboba Band and water agencies, that ultimately led to an agreement that quantified the Tribe’s prior and paramount water rights at 9,000 acre-feet per year, resolved all of the claims for interference with and damage to the water resources of the Reservation, and provided for the construction of water projects to facilitate the exercise of Soboba’s rights.

Today, the Soboba Indian Reservation lies in the lower reaches of the San Jacinto Mountains, and encompasses nearly 8,0000 acres, with 400 acres devoted to residential use. The Soboba Band currently has over 1,600 tribal members who are governed by an elected Tribal Council that consists of 5 tribal members.

Currently, the Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library is a sub-department of the Soboba Cultural Resource Department which includes the Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Cultural Monitoring, Cultural Programming, and the Cultural Garden. Established in 2003, through an Administration for Native Americans (ANA) Grant, the Soboba Cultural Center, first named Cham-Mix Poki “house of our culture”, was designed to develop educational programs on traditional culture, and to promote workshops on Luiseño and Cahuilla cultures. Originally housed in the D-Q University modular trailers, the Soboba Cultural Center has been relocated numerous times, currently staff is displaced and working out of an extremely limited temporary location. As the collections of literary and cultural materials grew, a library was established with the donation of books on various North American Indian topics. Having outgrown its original mission in 2009, the Cham-Mix Poki was restructured and became the Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library. The Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library strives to promote the understanding, appreciation, contribution, and the unique role the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians have played in the history of Southern California; this is done through offering programs that enhance the education and preservation of Luiseño and Cahuilla heritage and culture, as well as acting as repository for the tribe’s historical, archival materials and items of cultural patrimony.

NARRATIVE

A. Project Justification

Proposed Project:

The Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library (SCC&RL) is seeking funding to strengthen and expand library services for Soboba tribal members and the surrounding community. Requested funds will support the transformation of an existing space into a welcoming, fully functional library environment; assist staff in updating and developing comprehensive Library Policies and Procedures; and help sustain a portion of staff wages essential to project implementation.

Funding will also enable staff to participate in professional trainings and conferences that build long-term capacity in library management, cataloging, and culturally responsive information services. In addition, the project will significantly enhance access to the Library's collection of more than 1,500 books by supporting the ongoing inventory, cataloging, and reclassification of materials. Books will be organized according to Library of Congress subject headings while incorporating culturally accurate and tribally appropriate terminology, ensuring that the collection is both accessible and reflective of Soboba tribal values.

Through these efforts, the SCC&RL will create a more accessible, culturally grounded, and professionally managed library that better serves the needs of the Soboba tribal community.

Program Goals

The Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library Enhancement Project potentially addresses all of the IMLS Agency-Level Goal 1: Champion Lifelong Learning; Agency-Level Goal 2: Strengthen Community Engagement; Agency-Level Goal 3: Advance Collections Stewardship and Access. More specifically, the project will also address three NAE Program Goals, Objective 1 – Serve the learning needs and interests of the community; Objective 2: Improve community well-being; Objective 3 – Provide access to and preservation of information and collections.

Need:

Up until September 2024, the Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library had resided on the first floor of the Soboba Tribal Administration Building, along with other tribal departments dedicated to serving the Soboba Community. Here, the Soboba Cultural Resources Department, which included the Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library, the Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Cultural Programming, and the administrative efforts for the Soboba Cultural Garden, worked collectively toward the preservation of Soboba values, culture, traditions, lands, and resources for all Soboba Tribal Members past, present, and future. The Department's work spaces consisted of a smaller Tribal Historic Preservation Office space, and a larger work area with 3 work stations, a conference table, and all of the SCC&RL's Collections and holdings. As a whole, the Soboba Cultural Resource Department carries out an assortment of duties relating to their sub-department's responsibilities, which often left staff struggling for space. During the Department's busier months, staff work spaces would get overwhelmingly crowded, which resulted in visitors and tribal members voicing how the space felt uninviting.

The SCC&RL's holdings include over 2,000 records and manuscripts, over 500 newspaper articles and clippings, over 4,000 photographs in various formats, over 100 3-D objects, and approximately 1,500 library books covering a range of topics relating to Indian Country, with a focus on Southern California tribes and nations. The Library Collection comes in various formats consisting of chronicles, encyclopedias, bibliographies, histories, research journals, memoirs, codes & regulations, guides, autobiographies, lectures, treaties, speeches, judicial rulings, congressional bills, reports, statements, proceedings, manuals, etc. covering a wide range of topics relating to topics such as traditional ecological knowledge, customs and traditions, identity, language, sovereignty, songs and dances, food and drink, horses and animals, arts and crafts, basketry, pottery, films and photography, political organization, poetry, mission system, displacement, boarding schools, and much more.

During the ongoing inventory of the Library Book Collection, the SCC&RL identified a significant need for a formal classification system. The collection is not organized using established standards such as the Dewey Decimal System or Library of Congress subject headings; instead, materials are placed haphazardly across nine wooden laminate bookcases. This lack of structure has made it difficult and time-consuming for staff to locate specific titles or fulfill research requests. The bookcases themselves are positioned along the walls of the Cultural Center office, where staff workstations often block access, limiting the ability to browse and further impeding research activities. Because the inventory process is still underway, no searchable catalog currently exists, and any partial catalog would be incomplete and unreliable.

The Tribal Administration Building has provided a temporary home for the Soboba Cultural Center & Research Library, but the space was not designed to support a growing cultural collection or the level of access expected by Tribal members, researchers, and visitors. The limited footprint around the bookcases made it difficult for staff to retrieve materials efficiently, often resulting in long wait times for even simple research requests. Without room for expansion, the collection cannot grow in a way that reflects the evolving needs of the community.

Beyond storage constraints, the space offers no dedicated areas for exhibition or display. As a result, visitors and Tribal members are unable to see the breadth or significance of the materials the SCC&RL stewards. The absence of visible collections has led to confusion about what is held, what is being preserved, and how these materials support cultural knowledge and community identity. This lack of visibility limits opportunities for cultural education, outreach, and intergenerational learning.

Although the Administration Building is open to Tribal members, meaningful access to the SCC&RL often requires scheduled appointments. Staff created Research and Access Request forms to streamline the process, but the limitations of the space made it difficult to meet the volume and variety of requests. Locating materials can require significant time due to the constrained layout, and staff frequently resort to digitizing items simply to make them accessible. These workarounds, while helpful, are not sustainable and do not provide the level of service the community deserves.

Additionally, the space lacked a dedicated visitor computer station, offering only a single laptop with limited access to collection resources. This restricted independent research and prevents visitors from exploring digital holdings, online databases, or other reference materials. The inability to provide a

reliable research workstation diminishes the SCC&RL's role as a resource hub for Tribal members, students, and researchers.

The public nature of the office environment posed additional challenges. Conversations involving culturally sensitive information could not take place discreetly, and collections care work requiring privacy or controlled conditions was sometimes difficult to perform. The absence of secure storage raised concerns about the safety and long-term preservation of the materials, many of which hold deep cultural, historical, and familial significance. These conditions fell short of best practices for stewardship and do not reflect the level of care the community expects for its cultural heritage.

In September 2024, the first floor of the Soboba Tribal Administration building experienced an unexpected flood that forced the Soboba Cultural Resource Department, the Soboba Environmental Department, the Informational Technology Department, and Human Resources Department, to temporarily relocate office spaces. Luckily, besides some office furniture and bookcases, no Collection items were harmed during the flood. The Cultural Resource Department staff was relocated to vacant office spaces within the Soboba Public Works Yard, while all the Collections items and a majority of office contents were transported to an off-site climate-controlled storage bin, that is located about a mile up the road. With the current workspace being temporary, along with the majority of the collection being stored off-site, staff has become even more limited in carrying out library services for the Soboba community.

Since the flood, the temporary workspaces at the Public Works Yard have allowed staff to maintain basic day-to-day operations, but they have severely limited the Tribe's ability to provide essential library and archival services. The Yard consists of three structures – an office trailer, a large manufacturing building, and a smaller manufacturing building – where the Soboba Cultural Resource Department has been required to share space with Public Works staff.

The Public Works Department play a critical role in supporting the community through facilities operations, infrastructure improvements, transportation, grounds maintenance, water services, and emergency preparedness. As a result, the Yard is an active industrial environment equipped with tractors, water trucks, and other heavy machinery. This setting exposes Cultural Department staff and any potential collections to airborne dust, pollutants, chemical fumes, and other contaminants that pose significant risks to cultural materials.

Security challenges further complicate operations. The building cannot be fully secured, and frequent foot traffic during business hours increases the risk of theft, pest intrusion, uncontrolled climate conditions, and potential breaches of cultural sensitivity and privacy. Due to these environmental and security concerns, staff have been forced to keep all physical collection materials in off-site storage, retrieving only items that require immediate care or access. For collections that have not yet been digitized, this has made access nearly impossible.

These limitations have understandably led to frustration among tribal members and employees who rely on the SCC&RL for cultural knowledge, research, and community connection. Without a safe, dedicated, and accessible facility, the SCC&RL cannot fully deliver the library and archival services its members deserve.

To better meet community needs and preserve Soboba cultural heritage, Tribal Council and Leadership have approved the relocation of the Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library to the soon-to-be-vacant Soboba TANF building, centrally located on the Tribal Administration campus near the Soboba Tribal Preschool. This move will finally provide the Soboba community with a dedicated, accessible library space designed exclusively for tribal use. Relocating the collections from off-site storage into a staffed, climate-appropriate facility will significantly improve preservation, visibility, and day-to-day care of important materials. The new location will also enhance access for tribal members, as staff will re-classify and re-shelve the Library Book Collection and develop a searchable catalog to help patron easily navigate available resources. With a functional, community-centered library, the Cultural Center will be positioned to serve as a vibrant hub for learning, cultural engagement, and intergenerational connection. This investment strengthens tribal sovereignty by ensuring that Soboba history, knowledge, and identity are preserved and shared accurately through curated exhibits, educational programming, and culturally grounded interpretation.

Target Audience

The Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians is made up of over 1600 enrolled tribal members, with the Soboba reservation spanning over 8,000 acres with 400 dedicated to residential use.

The project will target Soboba tribal members living on the Soboba Indian Reservation first, by creating a strong library that serves the Soboba community. This includes Soboba Tribal members and their families, Soboba Elders, Noli Indian School (Middle-High School), Soboba Tribal Preschool, Soboba Tribal Administration staff members, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, St. Jude Mission School, along with the local and tribal communities and researchers.

Currently the tribe offers various programs facilitated by many Soboba tribal departments, be it the Soboba Cultural Resource Department, Soboba TANF, Soboba Parks and Recreation, Soboba Tribal Environmental Department, etc. The programming and outreach offered to the Soboba community include cultural classes, talking circles, large-scale community events (Easter Picnic, Tribal Earth Day, Soboba Fiesta, 4th of July Celebration, Halloween Carnival, Christmas Parties), various sports activities, and professional opportunities for tribal youth.

Beneficiaries

The Soboba community and the Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library staff, will be the primary beneficiaries of the project. If awarded, untrained staff will be able to build capacity, as they attend trainings and conferences to gain the skills needed to undertake the project. Additionally, the new space will allow for staff to better service the community's cultural preservation needs. The stand-alone facility will also allow for more diligent and meticulous collections care work. It will be a place where tribal members can come to conduct personal research, browse the shelves, and eventually see items on display. Ultimately, the Library will become a more welcoming and inviting space for tribal members to connect more directly with their own history and stories, and potentially may pave the way for future donations. The new location has the potential to increase the SCC&RL's impact and bring more benefits to the community in the form of a library.

B. Project Work Plan

Activities

To strengthen services for the Soboba Tribal community, the SCC&RL proposes a coordinated set of initiatives that will modernize library operations, improve access, and support long-term stewardship of the collection. Staff (Lily Brandt and Renee Rhodes) will lead efforts to complete the full inventory of the Library Book Collection, finalize cataloging, and implement a consistent classification and shelving system that aligns with professional standards. These foundational tasks will ensure that materials are discoverable, accessible, and properly cared for.

Additional project components include acquiring appropriate furnishings for the proposed new library space, enabling the SCC&RL to create a functional, welcoming, and culturally responsive environment for visitors and researchers. Staff will also participate in professional conferences and trainings to strengthen their skills in library science, collections care, and community-centered service. Finally, the project will support ongoing updates to Library Policies and Procedures, ensuring that operations reflect best practices and meet the evolving needs of the Soboba community.

Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library Project Staff includes Cultural Center Manager Lily Brandt, who has a Master's Degree in Museum Studies and a Bachelor's Degree in History, and has been working in the preservation field for over 10 years. Lily Brandt, who has been in her position since 2019, grew up within the local area and has been involved and worked within the Soboba community, and has and has successfully managed IMLS grants in the past. Renee Rhodes is a Soboba tribal member and has been in her position since 2023. With Renee Rhodes' lived experience and her nuanced understanding of traditions and protocols, her presence throughout the project and within the department help to build trust within the community.

Goal 1: Continue ongoing efforts in updating and developing Library Policies and Procedures.

In the first year of the project, Project Director, Lily Brandt will continue ongoing efforts to update and develop Library Policies and Procedures. Staff will conduct internal reviews of drafted sections every other month, until December 2027, with final reviews in January and February 2028. In March 2028, staff will submit completed Library Policies and Procedures to Soboba Tribal Council and Leadership for approval and implementation. With approved Library Policies and Procedures, this will provide the framework for how the Library Collections will be used, accessed, and preserved. These efforts will support, IMLS Agency-Level Goal 3, and ultimately NAE Program Goal, Objective 3.

Goal 2: Continue ongoing efforts in inventorying and cataloging Library Book Collection. Provide better access to Library Book Collection by re-classifying and re-shelving of Library Books according to Library of Congress subject headings.

Also, during the first year of the award, Lily Brandt and Renee Rhodes will continue an ongoing inventory and cataloging project of the Library Book collection into the Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library's PastPerfect database. Staff will also upgrade their current PastPerfect subscription to the Online Version, in order to provide tribal members with an online searchable catalog. During the second year of the project and to coincide with the department move, staff will re-classify the Library Book Collection by placing of subjects into categories and re-shelve the library books according to Library of Congress systems, while adopting subject headings with culturally appropriate and accurate terms. This classification and re-shelving task this will help to further facilitate access to the books within the Library Collection for visitors and tribal members to browse the shelves. At the end of the project staff will

publish the catalog (via PastPerfect online version) to the department's website. These efforts will also support IMLS Agency-Level Goal 3, 3.1, and ultimately, NAE Program Goal, Objective 3.

Goal 3: Build workforce capacity by attending Conferences and Trainings

In order to stay up to date on trends within the field, Project Director, Lily Brandt, will attend the annual IMLS Grant designated meetings, along with the American Library Association Conference and the International Conference for the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums. Renee Rhodes will also be attending the International Conference for the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums. In attending these conferences, it gives staff the opportunity to attend workshops and sessions that will allow them to stay current with trends and best practices, as well as opportunities for networking and relationship building with peers and colleagues in the field. These conferences will provide staff with essential information and guidance needed to carry out designated tasks within the Project. These efforts will support IMLS Agency-Level Goal 1, and ultimately, NAE Program Goal, Objective 2.

Goal 4: Purchase shelving, cases and other furniture to furnish existing Library space.

As the Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library staff prepares to move to a new location more suitable to carry out library services, staff will need to purchase new cantilever bookcases, as our old wooden ones were damaged. Cantilever shelves will be ordered at the end of the first year of the project (July – August 2027). Tribal members have voiced that they would also like to have some areas for display, as not all tribal knowledge is written in books, but rather shown through archives, photographs, oral histories, and other materials. With that being said, three display cases will be purchased at the end of the first year of the project (July – August 2027) to showcase the tribe's own history. Additionally, staff will purchase a study carrel and accompanying chairs in July 2027, with the goal of providing tribal members and visitors a designated computer stations to conduct their own personal research or their own technical needs. These efforts will support IMLS Agency-Level Goal 2, and ultimately NAE Program Goal Objective 1, Objective 2, and Objective 3.

Existing Resources:

The Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library Project benefits from several existing resources, including equipment, furniture, and previously purchased display cases through past IMLS efforts. The former Soboba TANF offices also provide a valuable space for the Project and future department endeavors. The Library Book Collection serves as another key resources, forming one of the primary foundations for project activities throughout its duration.

Additional resources include an ongoing inventory of the Library Book Collection and partially completed catalog list. Staff also utilizes an internal PastPerfect database, which supports daily operations. In addition, staff have been drafting and updating Library Policies and Procedures, which further contribute to the Project's existing resources.

The SCC&RL will also draw support from the tribe's IT Department and, when needed, the Public Works Department.

Sharing Lessons Learned:

The Soboba Cultural Center and Research Library will prepare reports to submit reports bi-weekly to Tribal Council and Leadership, reporting on the status of the project, along with any issues that may come up during the process. Project Director, Lily Brandt, will also meet with the Tribal Executive Officer, Steven Estrada bi-weekly and provide updates related to grant tasks. Additionally, Renee Rhodes will also be submitting monthly progress reports to Lily Brandt, Project Director. Staff will also share their results and lessons learned with the community through a quarterly publication “Tribal Talk” that is sent out to tribal members.

C. Project Results

Intended Results:

The project aims to establish a fully functioning, culturally responsive library where tribal members and visitors can easily navigate and access collection material formats. By creating a dedicated, well-organized space, the library will strengthen opportunities for community engagement, learning, and connection to Soboba tribal history.

A key outcome of the project is the complete classification and shelving of the Library Book Collection using Library of Congress subject headings, supplemented with culturally accurate and tribally appropriate terminology. This work will support the development of a searchable catalog, enabling patrons to independently browse and locate materials for the first time.

The project will also build long-term departmental capacity. Staff will participate in professional conferences and workshops to gain the skills and resources necessary to manage collections, catalog materials, and deliver high-quality services. In addition, staff will finalize and implement comprehensive Library Policies and Procedures that outline standards for access, care, and daily operations.

Together, these results will create a sustainable, accessible, and culturally grounded library that supports learning, preserves tribal knowledge and enhances services for the entire Soboba community.

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