



LAURA BUSH 21st CENTURY LIBRARIAN PROGRAM

Sample Application RE-259040-OLS-25
Project Category: Forum

North Carolina A&T State University (F.D. Bluford Library)

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$149,927

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, North Carolina will host a national forum and launch an online community of practice (Artificial Intelligence Catalyst Institute) to support the professional development of library professionals and library students in the field of Artificial Intelligence and how it can be used to support academic institutions in research and teaching. The first part of this project will be a national user needs assessment on Artificial Intelligence and academic librarianship, followed by a forum, Artificial Intelligence (AI) Catalyst Institute, and a Digital Commons Open Educational Resources Platform toolkit for using Artificial Intelligence in librarianship, to meet these needs. This project is a collaborative effort led by North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, North Carolina Central University, Winston-Salem State University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- 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.

The AI catalyst: Advancing AI Research & Information Literacy in Libraries

Abstract

A team of North Carolina HBCUs and MSIs seeks \$150,000 to host a national forum and launch an online community of practice (Artificial Intelligence Catalyst Institute) to support the professional development of library professionals and library students in the field of AI and how it can be used to support academic institutions in research and teaching. The first part of this project will be a national user needs assessment on AI and academic librarianship, followed by a forum (Artificial Intelligence (AI) Catalyst Institute and a Digital Commons OER Platform toolkit for using AI in librarianship, to meet these needs. This project aligns with IMLS Goal 1: Champion Lifelong Learning, specifically Objective 1.2

Introduction

North Carolina A&T State University seeks \$150,000 in funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to-launch the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Catalyst Institute, A Community of Practice for Librarians at Minority Serving Institutions, library professionals and ILS students as well as start a peer-reviewed OER AI Toolkit/Journal of Practice in AI for the academic library field. This Institute aims to empower library professionals, ILS library students, and librarians who work at HBCUs and MSIs, by providing access to cutting-edge Generative AI applications, fostering a well-rounded and informed dialogue around AI in librarianship. There are historical inequities in technology funding and training at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) and without a targeted investment in professional development in this emerging technology, these challenges will be exacerbated (ACE Brief Illustrates HBCU Funding Inequities, n.d.).

This project is a collaborative effort led by North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, North Carolina Central University, Winston-Salem State University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Leveraging our connections with national organizations such as the HBCU Library Alliance and Joint Council of Librarians of Color, this initiative will unite various voices to challenge skepticism and untrustworthiness concerns surrounding artificial intelligence in higher education (Wiggins, 2023). This project will:

- Train Librarians at HBCUs and MSIs: Equip library professionals with the skills to implement Generative AI applications effectively within their institutions.
- Support Library Students: Provide hands-on training in AI applications and tools, preparing the next generation of librarians to lead in this evolving field.
- Develop a Tailored, Peer Review Toolkit and Journal of Practice for AI and academic librarianship: Create a comprehensive, peer reviewed toolkit and journal designed specifically for HBCU and MSI libraries, guiding staff on the ethical and efficient use of AI in librarianship.
- Launch The AI Catalyst Institute: Start an ongoing, national community of practice for librarians at HBCUs, and MSI all institutions to learn about how to use Generative AI applications. Participation will be free and open to any library professional from any institution.

By providing space specifically for communities and institutions to engage with Generative AI, we aim to share cutting-edge ideas that will impact teaching, learning, and research. The AI Catalyst Institute will not only help to bridge the technology gap but also cultivate a more engaging and informed AI landscape within the library community.

Project Justification:

This project addresses the critical need to equip librarians at HBCU and MSI universities with the tools necessary to navigate and benefit from rapid advancements in generative AI technologies. Historically, HBCU and MSI communities

have been disproportionately impacted by the digital divide (Closing the Digital Divide, 2023). HBCU and MSI libraries play a pivotal role in bridging this gap by training students to become proficient users of essential workforce technologies. These libraries also support faculty in leveraging large language model (LLM) and generative AI tools to enhance their research and teaching outcomes, ensuring that these institutions are not left behind in this transformative era. Furthermore, as universities grapple with the challenges and opportunities posed by generative AI—such as concerns over plagiarism, data security, access barriers, and biased outputs—libraries are uniquely positioned to address these issues, thanks to their expertise in information evaluation and data stewardship. However, discussions surrounding AI biases and inequities must prominently include various voices, as these communities are often most affected.

While some libraries have initiated efforts to integrate AI tools, such as UT Austin’s School of Information Science training programs funded by IMLS, there remains a lack of focused efforts on HBCU and MIS libraries. This project aims to address that gap by creating a dedicated forum to design a toolkit and establish an ongoing community of practice tailored to the needs and experiences of HBCU libraries and minority-serving institutions. Current initiatives, like AI4Libraries and Generative AI in Libraries, have not prioritized or adequately represented these critical voices. Given the historical underfunding and limited technological resources faced by HBCUs, this project is essential for ensuring access and participation in AI advancements.

The AI Catalyst Institute targets librarians working at HBCUs and MSIs, library professionals, and students in Library and Information Science programs. There are 107 HBCUs designated by the U.S. Department of Education and 710 Minority Serving Institutions in the United States, making this a significant population in need of targeted support. The project ensures that those most immediately affected will have the tools, training, and community support necessary to advance their institutions.

In addition, the toolkit developed through this project will serve as a critical long-term resource for all libraries. As new AI technologies and applications emerge, the toolkit will be regularly updated and maintained by North Carolina A&T, ensuring that it remains a dynamic, easily accessible resource for library professionals. This ongoing support will ensure that these institutions continue to lead in AI adoption within the library field.

Ultimately, the beneficiaries of this project extend beyond librarians and library professionals. Students trained by these librarians will gain critical skills to succeed in the workforce. Faculty members empowered with AI tools will enhance their research and teaching, fostering innovation and engagement at their institutions. This project aligns with the IMLS Goal 1: Champion Lifelong Learning, particularly Objective 1.2, which emphasizes training and professional development for library staff. By addressing these challenges in librarianship and AI adoption, this project advances technological access and integration for minority designated institutions.

Existing research and professional development opportunities related to AI in librarianship often lack a focus on HBCUs and MSIs. To assess the specific needs, challenges, and perceptions of AI use in libraries that serve HBCUs and MSIs, North Carolina A&T State University conducted an AI Librarianship Survey via Qualtrics, disseminated across multiple library listservs to reach a broad audience of academic library professionals, LIS faculty, and graduate students at HBCUs and MSI. This survey aimed to:

- Identify gaps in AI training and professional development opportunities for library staff at HBCUs and MSIs.
- Understand concerns regarding AI ethics, bias, and equitable access to AI tools.
- Gather insights into the most pressing AI-related needs of library professionals.
- Inform the development of the AI Toolkit and professional development initiatives proposed in this project.

We received 140 responses to this survey. When asked what resources would be most helpful to support AI integration in library services at their institution, 79% of respondents reported that staff training was a need. Furthermore, when asked what the main challenges were related to implementing AI tools at HBCUs, 56% of respondents reported, “Limited AI-specific training for faculty, staff, or students.” Moreover, 67% of respondents wanted additional support for research assistance tools such as Elicit and Research Rabbit. Our project will meet this training need identified in this survey. Moreover, our peer-reviewed toolkit/ journal of practice will provide ongoing training that currently is not being offered.

Our team conducted a search of toolkits related to AI. We sought to find toolkits that were similar to what our team envisions: an open educational resource aimed for an academic librarian audience that serves HBCUs or MSIs. We did not find this kind of toolkit. Below is a table reviewing the toolkits we found and a discussion of how our toolkit will fill a gap in the available resources for our audience.

Toolkit	Audience	What the toolkit contains
The Ultimate AI Toolkit for Librarians	Librarians	This toolkit lists and describes six AI tools. The tools that are suggested are not open access tools. These tools cost money.
AI Guidance for Schools	Primary and Secondary educators, parents	This toolkit is text based only. It focuses on how to incorporate AI into the education system and policy. It also educates the audience on what AI is at a beginner level.
An AI Toolkit for Librarians	Librarians and educators	This toolkit is an article. It covers what AI is and offers guidance in how to create generative AI prompts, ethical considerations, and context for AI from a librarian perspective. It also includes a list of web-based AI tools, with a K-12 focus. It seems more focused on school and public libraries. For example, “Talk to your school’s or county’s technology department to see what policies around AI already exist.” This statement suggests that you are working for a school or the county. Academic libraries would reach out to different leadership.
AI: Tips and Tools from your Librarians	Academic Library Users	This is a libguide that reviews AI. It covers AI resources, citing AI, and local and national policies related to AI. This resource contains lists of AI resources organized into the following categories: AI Research Tools, GENAI Tools, Guides & Reports, Academic Articles, and Blogs and News.

Toolkit for this project

The first iteration of the toolkit developed in this grant will fill a number of gaps in information that these toolkits do not offer. It will include:

- Only resources that are freely available to librarians, students and academics. The previous toolkits do not focus on freely available resources and underfunded HBCUs might not be able to access the tools discussed.
- Originally training video resources, graphics, and webinars in addition to the text-based resources. These multi-media resources training videos will allow librarians and library staff to gain the technical knowledge to use this material regardless of training opportunities at their library. Items created will be peer-reviewed. Librarians will be able to submit original resources to be published in the toolkit as a publication.

For example, if this toolkit highlighted Research Rabbit an AI research tool, it might include: a how-to video tutorial providing a basic overview, a sample lesson plan of the tool could be incorporated into a library instruction workshop and a case study of how this tool has been used to further faculty research. See the table below for more detail.

Tool/Resource	Instructional Video	Lesson Plan	Case Study
ResearchRabbit	“Getting started with ResearchRabbit”- A 20-minute video including account setup, creating research collections, and tracking academic resources.	Lesson Plan 1: “Integrating ResearchRabbit into Library Instruction” Lesson Plan 2: “How to use ResearchRabbit in Literature Reviews and ongoing research projects.”	Case Study 1: "Using ResearchRabbit to Support Faculty Grant Proposals at an HBCU." Case Study 2: “Building Collaborative Research Networks with ResearchRabbit at MSIs.”

Project Work Plan

Overview: This two-year project is structured in three phases – Development, Implementation, and Evaluation/Sustainability. The core team (librarians and project staff from NC A&T, NCCU, WSSU, and UNCG) will work closely with the Continuing Education (CE) department at NC A&T to execute a successful two-day AI & Libraries forum in September 2026 and to establish the ongoing Community of Practice.

Phase 1: Development (August 2025 - July 2026)

Launch Community of Practice: At the start of the grant period, we will formalize the AI Catalyst Institute as a Community of Practice. In July 2025, Carlos and Tiffany will issue a call inviting new members (librarians, LIS educators, and students from HBCUs/MSIs nationwide) to join the CoP. Membership will require a two-year commitment of active engagement, including participating in tool demonstrations, virtual workshops, best-practice discussions, and reporting on AI’s impact at their institutions. This early establishment of the CoP ensures that a broad community is built before and around the forum, so that the event is not an end in itself but rather a springboard for ongoing collaboration. The knowledge and materials generated by CoP members will be shared through an open-access platform (proposed as *The AI Catalyst*: on NC A&T’s Digital Commons platform) to amplify overlooked voices in AI and librarianship.

Plan Forum: Planning for the two-day forum (The AI Catalyst Conference) will begin immediately in August 2025. The forum is envisioned as a national convening in September 2026 titled “*The AI Catalyst: Advancing AI Research & Information Literacy in Libraries.*” It will be hosted in-person at NC A&T’s campus (F.D. Bluford Library’s Alumni Event Center in Greensboro, NC) with a hybrid format to allow virtual participation. A planning committee comprised of the four partner institutions and the two leading PIs (Tiffany Russell and Carlos Grooms from NC A&T) will oversee all aspects of the event. Key planning steps include:

- Project Kickoff & Roles: Establish monthly planning meetings with NC A&T’s Continuing Education department and partner institutions. Define clear roles:
 - *Continuing Education Office*: Manage event logistics, registration (including continuing education credits for attendees), budget and contracts, and venue arrangements.

- *Forum Co-Chairs (Russell & Grooms)*: Lead agenda development, speaker recruitment, proposal solicitation (for papers/panels/workshops), and outreach to participants.
- **Scheduling & Venue**: Confirm the conference dates in September 2026 with university scheduling, and reserve necessary spaces (auditorium for keynotes, breakout rooms for workshops, space for a poster session). Secure room blocks at nearby hotels for attendees and speakers, and plan for technology needs to support livestreaming for remote attendees.
- **Speaker Invitations**: By fall 2025, develop a list of potential keynote speakers and panelists renowned in AI ethics, information science, and library innovation. Send formal invitation letters by December 2025 outlining the event theme, speaker roles, travel support, and honoraria as applicable. Our goal is to feature various thought leaders – for example, experts on AI bias and fairness – to anchor discussions on each day of the forum.
- **Call for Proposals (CFP)**: We will issue a Call for forum Proposals by late 2025. We will solicit a range of contributions – research papers, panel sessions, hands-on workshops, and poster presentations – focusing on practical applications of AI in academic libraries, case studies from HBCUs/MSIs, ethical considerations, and information literacy programs. The CFP will be announced in January 2026 with a submission deadline in March 2026. Proposal review criteria (relevance to theme, innovation, practical impact) will be established with the grant team, and a review committee with representatives from each partner institution will evaluate submissions in April 2026. Notifications of accepted proposals will be sent by May 2026.
- **Promotion and Outreach**: Starting January 2026, we will widely circulate the forum announcement and CFP. Promotion channels include library professional networks and consortia (e.g., ALA, the Carolina Consortium, state library associations), HBCU/MSI listservs, academic departments, and social media platforms. By leveraging these networks, we aim to attract a national audience of librarians, educators, and students. As the forum date nears, we will ramp up marketing: launching a dedicated webpage on the Digital Commons OER platform with event information and opening registration, regular email updates, and social media engagement to highlight keynote speakers and session topics. Access will be prioritized in all communications (e.g., offering early-bird registration rates, clearly indicating hybrid attendance options, etc.).
- **Logistics & Infrastructure**: Throughout early 2026, the planning committee will coordinate logistics to ensure a smooth hybrid event. This includes working with university IT to guarantee robust Wi-Fi, video conferencing and streaming capabilities, and adequate AV equipment in all rooms. We will also arrange for accessibility accommodations (such as live captioning, ASL interpretation, and assistive listening devices) to make the forum available for all participants
- **Finalize Program**: By June 2026, we will finalize the forum agenda based on accepted proposals and invited talks. The program will be structured to balance keynotes, panel discussions, breakout sessions, and interactive workshops. Each partner institution will help identify moderators for sessions and coordinate any multi-speaker panels. We will share a preliminary schedule with all speakers and panelists to align content and avoid overlap, ensuring a cohesive experience for attendees.
- **Pre-Conference Prep**: In July 2026 (just before the event), we will handle final preparations: confirm all speaker travel and accommodations, print materials (nametags, programs, signage, feedback forms with QR codes), and train a team of library student volunteers. Volunteers will assist with registration check-in, provide tech support in sessions, and help remote participants navigate the online platform. A brief orientation/training will be conducted for volunteers, so they are comfortable with their roles. We will also conduct AV tests and a run-through with speakers the evening before Day 1 to iron out any technical issues.
- **Toolkit and Platform Development**: Alongside forum planning, Phase 1 involves building the AI Toolkit OER platform that will serve as a cornerstone for the community's resources. From August to December 2025, the results of the needs assessment survey will guide us in curating initial toolkit content on NC A&T's Digital Commons (an open access repository). Priority topics (as identified by the survey and early CoP discussions) such

as AI ethics, bias mitigation, research assistance tools, and AI in information literacy instruction will be addressed first. We will create AI Literacy Libguides (using Springshare) that introduce tools like Elicit, Scite ai, AI writing tutors, etc., with clear instructions and use cases. We will also produce short training videos and webinars to complement text-based guides, recognizing that many in our audience benefit from on-demand video tutorials. All resources included will be free or open-source to ensure accessibility for underfunded institutions. The toolkit will encourage community contributions: we plan to implement a submission and peer-review mechanism so that librarians can share original guides or case studies, which, once reviewed, can be published as part of the toolkit. By the end of Year 1, the Digital Commons OER platform will be live and populated with initial content (Libguides, recorded webinars, curated resource lists, etc.), ready to be showcased at the forum.

- By the end of Phase 1 (July 2026), we expect to have: (1) a well-organized plan and program for the September 2026 forum (with speakers, sessions, and logistics confirmed), (2) an engaged cohort of CoP members contributing to discussions and resource creation, and (3) a functional digital platform housing initial AI toolkit resources and recorded trainings.

Phase 2: Implementation & Community Growth (August 2026- June 2027)

National Forum Execution (September 2026): The AI Catalyst Forum will take place as a two-day conference in September 2026. This event is both the culmination of the planning effort and the launchpad for the ongoing community of practice. (While the exact agenda of the forum will be based on the final results of the user needs assessment that we conducted in our initial grant research, below is a potential outline based on available information.)

Day 1 of the forum will focus on *“AI, Bias, and Information Literacy.”* It will open with welcomes from the Forum Chairs and institutional leaders, outlining the forum’s goals of educating librarians and LIS students on ethical, effective AI use. A keynote address by a leading AI scholar (e.g., Dr. Ruha Benjamin, known for working on technology and social bias) will set the stage by exploring how AI can perpetuate bias and how libraries can champion AI literacy. This will be followed by a panel discussion featuring experts like Dr. Safiya Noble, Joy Buolamwini, and other thought leaders in AI ethics and librarianship. The panel will tackle questions around AI’s role in amplifying or counteracting biases, the librarian’s role in combating inaccurate information, and strategies to integrate AI literacy into library instruction. Afternoon sessions will break into interactive workshops and breakout groups – for instance, a breakout on teaching students to evaluate AI-generated content, and a hands-on workshop on developing AI literacy programs in libraries. These activities emphasize practical skill-building, giving attendees experience with lesson planning and ethical scenarios. Day 2 centers on *“AI, Inaccurate Information, and Ethical Implementation.”* It will feature another keynote (e.g., Joy Buolamwini discussing how libraries can defend human rights in a machine-driven world) and a panel on AI, flawed information, and library leadership with participants such as Dr. Danah Boyd and Dr. Siva Vaidhyanathan. Attendees will learn about combating incorrect AI generated information, developing AI policies in academic settings, and best practices for leadership in AI adoption. Day 2 will also include an innovative video poster session during lunch, where presenters share 2-minute video summaries of their projects (e.g., applications of AI in research tools, collection management, or accessibility services). These poster videos will be made available through the online toolkit for the benefit of virtual attendees and for post-conference viewing. Finally, the forum concludes with a workshop on creating AI policy frameworks in libraries (helping participants draft guidelines for ethical AI use and bias mitigation) and a closing keynote (e.g., Dr. Siva Vaidhyanathan on AI & intellectual freedom), followed by closing remarks and a discussion of next steps for the community.

Throughout the event, we will ensure high engagement for both in-person and remote participants. Live Q&A and discussion sessions will include input from virtual attendees. Social media will be used during the forum to share highlights in real time and keep the broader community involved. By hosting this forum, we expect to directly train and inspire hundreds of library professionals and students, seeding ideas that they can take back to their home institutions. Just

as importantly, the forum will solidify connections among CoP members and new attendees, who will be invited to join the AI Catalyst Institute community for continued collaboration.

Community of Practice Continuation: After the forum, the AI Catalyst Institute will transition into a more formalized Community of Practice structure. We will hold virtual meetings each semester (at least twice a year) for CoP members to reconnect, discuss progress, and delve into new AI topics or challenges that arise. These meetings may include lightning talks or mini panels to share how libraries have implemented ideas from the forum or new tools they've discovered. The CoP will also continue the webinar series, offering 3–4 professional development webinars annually (drawing on forum content, member suggestions, or updates in AI technology). All CoP activities will be coordinated through an online hub (using the Digital Commons platform and email listservs) to keep momentum. By the end of 2026, we aim for the CoP to grow beyond the initial core institutions to include library professionals from across the country, creating a national network of AI-informed librarians who support one another.

Toolkit Expansion and Knowledge Dissemination: A major implementation task post-forum is to integrate the forum outputs into the AI toolkit and expand the repository of resources. Immediately following the conference, we will collect all presentations, papers, and materials from the event. With permission from presenters, we will upload keynote recordings, panel session videos, slide decks, and workshop handouts to the Digital Commons OER platform. We will also compile practical guides and case studies that emerged from forum discussions (for example, if a breakout group drafts an outline for an AI literacy lesson or a sample AI policy, we will refine and publish it as a resource in the toolkit). The video poster session clips will be indexed and added to the toolkit as an inspiration gallery of AI projects. By December 2026, the toolkit will evolve into a richer, more robust resource, essentially capturing the collective knowledge of the forum. This ensures that even those who could not attend can benefit, and those who did attend have materials to refer back to and share with colleagues.

Another key milestone in early 2027 is the launch of an open-access journal to sustain scholarship and dialogue. Building on the “journal of practice” concept from our planning, we will establish the *AI Catalyst: The Community of Practice Journal* (tentative title) on the Digital Commons platform. By Spring 2027, we plan to announce the journal’s editorial board (drawing from project PIs and partner institution faculty) and open a call for submissions. This peer-reviewed journal will provide a venue for librarians and researchers (especially from HBCUs/MSIs) to publish articles, case studies, and lessons learned. The first issue is expected to include select papers from the forum as well as newly submitted research, ensuring that knowledge continues to be disseminated widely. The creation of this journal addresses the need for sustained academic and professional discourse on AI’s impact in minority-serving institutions, and it solidifies NC A&T’s Digital Commons as a national platform for these conversations.

Webinar Series: To build upon the momentum and provide additional professional development, we will host a virtual webinar series during Phase 3 (anticipated three webinars beginning June 2027). Topics will align with community interests, such as “*Using AI for Reference and Research Services*,” “*AI in Cataloging and Metadata*,” or “*Ethical Use of Generative AI in Instruction*.” These sessions, delivered via Zoom, will feature experts or experienced practitioners, including CoP members, and will be recorded. The recordings and any accompanying materials will be added to the Digital Commons toolkit repository for ongoing access. This not only enriches the toolkit but also allows us to tailor later content based on questions and feedback from participants, keeping the project responsive to user needs.

By the end of Phase 2 (June 2027), we anticipate having delivered on the project’s major outputs: a successful inaugural conference, an expanded toolkit populated with community-generated content, a functioning community of practice with regular activities, and a new journal that elevates ongoing research and discussion. The library professionals engaged through this project will have significantly increased their AI literacy and have formed a supportive peer network. Moreover, the momentum gained will position us to continue these activities beyond the grant period.

Phase 3 Evaluation & Sustainability (July 2027 and Beyond)

Our evaluation plan will measure outcomes against the baseline established by the initial user needs assessment survey. This assessment survey was conducted in January of 2025 and received IRB approval from N.C. A&T State University's IRB office. In mid-2027, we will conduct follow-up surveys and focus groups with forum attendees, CoP members, and toolkit users. We will examine changes in participants' confidence and skills in using AI tools, the extent to which they have implemented AI projects or training at their libraries and gather qualitative feedback on the usefulness of the forum and toolkit. We will also analyze usage data from the Digital Commons platform (e.g., number of toolkit downloads, video views, and new contributions) to gauge engagement. These metrics will be compared to our initial goals: for instance, an increase in self-reported AI proficiency among HBCU/MSI librarians, growth in adoption of AI tools in library services, and active participation in CoP activities. The results of this evaluation will be compiled into a comprehensive final report (by late 2027) which will be shared publicly via the OER platform and disseminated to stakeholders and sponsors. This report will highlight successes, lessons learned, and recommendations for future AI initiatives in academic libraries. Additionally, we plan to publish the findings in our new journal and present them at relevant conferences (e.g., ALA, EDUCAUSE) to inform the broader library community's understanding of AI professional development models.

To ensure the AI Catalyst Institute and its resources continue to thrive beyond the grant, we will implement a multi-pronged sustainability plan:

To ensure the AI Catalyst Institute and its resources continue to thrive beyond the grant, we will implement a multi-pronged sustainability plan:

- **Institutional Commitment:** North Carolina A&T State University will maintain stewardship of the Digital Commons toolkit and journal in the near term. The project's PIs (Tiffany Russell and Carlos Grooms) have committed to continue updating content, moderating submissions, and coordinating CoP communications as part of their ongoing roles. We will integrate the toolkit site into the library's regular web maintenance schedule to ensure technical support and updates are routine.
- **Community Ownership:** We will cultivate a sense of ownership of the CoP among member institutions. After the initial launch period, we plan to rotate responsibility for certain community activities and site maintenance to other participating HBCUs/MSIs on a biennial basis. For example, another institution might take the lead on organizing the next forum (scheduled as a biennial event in 2028) or curating new toolkit content for a year, with NC A&T providing support. This distributed leadership model will help embed the community of practice across institutions and reduce reliance on a single host.
- **Funding and Partnerships:** We will explore additional funding to support ongoing activities. This may include future IMLS grants targeting implementation or research, grants from foundations like Mellon or Knight for digital equity and innovation, or sponsorships for the conference in future years. We will also formalize partnerships with organizations such as ALA, ACRL, BCALA, and the HBCU Library Alliance. Such partnerships could provide venues for training, help attract contributors to the toolkit and journal and possibly offer financial or in-kind support (for example, ALA co-sponsoring a webinar series or promoting our toolkit through their channels).
- **Continuous Content Renewal:** The project team and CoP members will schedule annual content review meetings to ensure the toolkit remains up to date. As AI technologies evolve quickly, we will add new case studies, tools, and updated best practice guidelines each year. Community members will be encouraged to contribute content (with peer review oversight), keeping the resource active and relevant. The open-access journal will likewise invite ongoing submissions and bring in new editorial board members over time to sustain its operations.

- **Platform Preservation:** In the event that NC A&T's platform needs to change in the future, we have a plan to migrate content to another appropriate open repository, ensuring no loss of access. All materials will be backed up and stored with standard metadata (using Dublin Core, etc., for interoperability), so they can be preserved and reused easily. The emphasis on open licensing for toolkit materials will allow other libraries to freely adopt and adapt our resources, extending the impact even if the original site is succeeded by others.

Through these strategies, we anticipate that the AI Catalyst Institute community will continue to grow and evolve well beyond the grant period, maintaining a vibrant exchange of knowledge. By the project's end, HBCU and MSI library professionals will have formed lasting connections and gained confidence as leaders in AI adoption. This community-focused initiative ensures that librarians who were previously at the margins of AI conversations become key contributors to shaping how AI is used ethically and effectively in libraries across the nation. The long-term outcome will be a more equitable and prepared library workforce, capable of navigating the challenges of AI while championing information literacy and inclusion in the digital age.

Project Results

The AI Catalyst: Advancing AI Research & Information Literacy in Libraries project will produce significant, lasting outcomes designed to strengthen the capacity of HBCU and MSI libraries to engage with artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. By the end of the grant period, the project will yield the following key results:

Creation of the AI Catalyst Institute Community of Practice (CoP)

The project will establish a sustainable, national Community of Practice that brings together librarians, LIS educators, and students from HBCUs, MSIs, and partner institutions. This CoP will provide ongoing peer support, knowledge sharing, and collaborative opportunities, enabling participants to continue developing AI skills, share best practices, and address emerging challenges in AI literacy beyond the grant period.

Development of the AI Toolkit

A comprehensive, open-access AI Toolkit will be created and hosted on NC A&T's Digital Commons platform. This toolkit will include practical resources such as AI literacy guides, ethical use frameworks, instructional materials, recorded webinars, and case studies specifically tailored to the unique needs of HBCU and MSI libraries. The toolkit will remain available for continuous updates and contributions from the CoP, ensuring its relevance and growth over time.

Successful Execution of the AI Catalyst Forum

The project will culminate in a national two-day AI Catalyst Forum, convening library professionals, LIS students, and AI ethics experts to address the challenges and opportunities of AI in academic libraries. This forum will feature keynotes, panels, hands-on workshops, and a video poster session, with the proceedings and materials archived and shared via the AI Toolkit.

Launch of an Open-Access Journal

To sustain scholarly engagement, the project will launch the *AI Catalyst: The Community of Practice Journal* on Digital Commons. This peer-reviewed journal will provide a platform for research and practice insights on AI applications in minority-serving institutions, highlighting well-rounded voices and innovative case studies.

Increased AI Literacy and Capacity at HBCU/MSI Libraries

Through training, resource development, and collaborative learning, participating librarians and students will significantly increase their understanding and application of AI technologies. This will lead to improved services at their home institutions, such as enhanced research support, information literacy programming, and AI-integrated library operations.

Centering AI Adoption on HBCU/MSI

By centering the voices of HBCU/MSI librarians and students, the project will ensure that AI adoption in libraries is approached with a strong focus on fairness, bias mitigation, and responsive practices. The resources and community fostered by the project will model how AI can be implemented ethically and broadly in academic libraries.

Long-Term Impact

Beyond the grant period, the AI Catalyst Institute and its associated resources will continue to grow as a national hub for AI literacy in libraries serving HBCU and MSI Libraries. Through its biennial forums, an active community of practice, ongoing webinars, and the open-access journal, the project will have a lasting influence on how academic libraries approach AI, ensuring our communities, and other under-resourced institutions are not left behind in the evolving landscape of AI-driven education and research.

Schedule of Completion

Project Title: The AI Catalyst: Advancing AI Research & Information Literacy in Libraries Project Period: August 2025 – June 2027

Project Activity	Start Date	End Date
Phase 1: Development (August 2025 – July 2026)		
Establish AI Catalyst Institute as a Community of Practice (CoP)	Aug 2025	July 2026
Conduct AI Librarianship Needs Assessment Survey	Aug 2025	Oct 2025
Issue Call for CoP Membership & Recruit Participants	Sept 2025	Dec 2025
Begin Development of AI Toolkit (OER Platform)	Sept 2025	July 2026
Monthly Planning Meetings with CoP & Institutional Partners	Aug 2025	June 2027
Begin Planning for AI Catalyst Forum	Aug 2025	Sept 2026
Identify and Confirm Forum Keynote Speakers and Panelists	Oct 2025	Dec 2025
Develop and Release Call for Proposals (CFP) for Forum	Jan 2026	March 2026
Review and Select Forum Presenters	April 2026	May 2026
Finalize Forum Program & Schedule	June 2026	July 2026
Promote Forum via Networks and Outreach Campaign	Jan 2026	Sept 2026
Confirm Forum Logistics (venue, tech, registration, accessibility)	March 2026	Aug 2026
Pre-Conference Prep & Volunteer Training	July 2026	Sept 2026
Phase 2: Implementation & Community Growth (Aug 2026 – June 2027)		
Host National AI Catalyst Forum	Sept 2026	Sept 2026
Launch Open-Access AI Toolkit on Digital Commons	Sept 2026	Dec 2026
Develop and Conduct Post-Forum Webinars (3-4 Sessions)	Oct 2026	June 2027
Transition AI Catalyst Institute to Formalized Community of Practice	Oct 2026	Dec 2026
Organize Biannual Virtual CoP Meetings	Jan 2027	Ongoing
Collect and Curate AI Forum Content for OER Repository	Oct 2026	Dec 2026
Establish Editorial Board and Publish First Issue of AI & Libraries Journal	Jan 2027	May 2027
Begin Planning for Next AI Catalyst Forum (Biennial Event)	May 2027	June 2027
Phase 3: Evaluation & Sustainability (July 2027 and Beyond)		
Conduct Post-Forum Survey & Focus Groups	July 2027	Sept 2027
Analyze Toolkit & Community Engagement Metrics	July 2027	Oct 2027
Publish Final Report on Project Outcomes & Impact	Oct 2027	Dec 2027
Develop Sustainability Plan for Ongoing CoP Operations	Jan 2027	Ongoing
Secure Additional Funding & Partnerships for Future Activities	Jan 2027	Ongoing