



LAURA BUSH 21st CENTURY LIBRARIAN PROGRAM

Sample Application RE-259604-OLS-26
Project Category: Community-Centered Implementation

University of North Texas College of Information

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$99,999
Amount of cost share:	\$0

The University of North Texas Department of Information Science, in partnership with the Association of College and Research Libraries Community and Junior College Libraries Section, will empower community college librarians with data literacy resources. This community-centered implementation project builds from an IMLS-funded Data Literacy Toolkit developed by the same project partners and focused on community college librarians. The project team will develop an incubator program in which a cohort of librarians will adapt and integrate the toolkit into their institutions. By recruiting both individual librarians and institutional teams from community colleges, the program will provide tailored pathways for implementing the toolkit. The project will also produce a playbook for customizing data literacy programming in different community college contexts.

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 Data Literacy Catalyst: A Data Literacy Implementation Incubator for Community College Libraries

INTRODUCTION

The University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Information Science respectfully requests \$99,999 from the **Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program**. This **one-year Community-Centered Implementation** project aims to empower community college librarians to become catalysts who transform their campus community into critical, informed, and data-literate citizens.

In partnership with the ACRL Community and Junior College Libraries Section (CJCLS), this project will build a **Data Literacy Incubator** program in which a cohort of librarians will adapt and integrate the **Data Literacy Toolkit** into their institutions. This Toolkit was developed as the primary outcome of the IMLS-funded initiative “Building community college library capacity for supporting students’ data literacy needs” (RE-256673-OLS-24), which is currently concluding its final phase. By recruiting both individual librarians and institutional teams from community colleges, the program will provide tailored pathways for implementing the toolkit.

The outcome of the incubator program will be a **Data Literacy Toolkit Adaptation Playbook**. This replicable guide documents the process of customizing data literacy programming for diverse community college contexts.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATIONS

The Imperative of Data Literacy in Community Colleges

As data has become an essential part of our daily lives and has changed the way we make decisions, the importance of data literacy – i.e., the capability to read, write, think critically, and apply analytical methodologies and procedures to data – has become increasingly evident. The rapid expansion of data usage has placed higher education institutions under increasing pressure to incorporate data into their educational frameworks. This is not just because employment in data-related occupations is projected to grow 34 percent from 2024 to 2034 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025), but also because the advancement of AI and the integration of algorithmic decision-making into organizations’ everyday operations now makes data literacy a required skill across all fields and industries (Koloski et al., 2025).

Among these higher education institutions, community colleges are no exception. In fact, the need for data literacy is arguably more pressing in community colleges (Community College Research Center, 2021). Today’s high-skilled technical workers are not just service technicians. For them, AI is not about coding but about interpreting algorithmic outputs. Therefore, data literacy is an essential interface that transforms a manual trade into a high-precision, high-paying career. Under the framework of Executive Order (EO) 14278, data literacy is no longer an extra skill; it is the baseline requirement for the “Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future.”

With over 1,000 institutions in the United States, community colleges are the backbone of America’s workforce. According to the National Skills Coalition (2025), a majority of jobs (52%) require skills

training beyond high school, though not a four-year degree. Such training is industry-specific, focusing on technical proficiency and practical application. But only 43 percent of America's workers have had access to the skill training necessary to fill these in-demand careers. In that sense, community colleges, the nation's training ground for careers in the skilled trades, are the essential bridge for this divide.

Community College Library as Data Hub: Evidence from Prior Projects

Community college libraries have been a key part of the academic experience. They have acted as a “lynchpin within the community college ecosystem” (Ithaka S+R, 2022), serving as a hub of resources, technology, related support services, and physical spaces designed to support academic success, scholarship, and the personal development of their students, faculty, and staff.

The role of the community college library as a “data hub” has recently been emphasized through our previous IMLS-funded initiatives: **RE-252374-OLS-22** and **RE-256673-OLS-24**¹. Our assessment study found community college students possess lower competency across various areas (Kim, Hong, & Evans, 2024) yet view data literacy as essential for career readiness (Kim, Lund, & Hong, 2026). Interviews with community college faculty identified data literacy as encompassing both technical skills and critical inquiry, which are essential for community college students, while emphasizing the real-world, practical application of these skills. Community college faculty viewed librarians as partners in advancing their students' data literacy. They describe libraries as data hubs capable of providing access to datasets, technical infrastructure and tools, offering instruction in making data actionable, and guiding the responsible use of data (Kim, Lund, & Santana, manuscript in preparation). Our interviews with community college librarians revealed a gap between faculty expectations and librarian practice. Community college librarians expressed genuine interest in expanding their practice of information literacy, viewing data literacy as a natural extension of their existing literacy expertise. However, many reported hesitancy as they did not know where or how to start (Kim, Evans, Hong, et al., 2024).

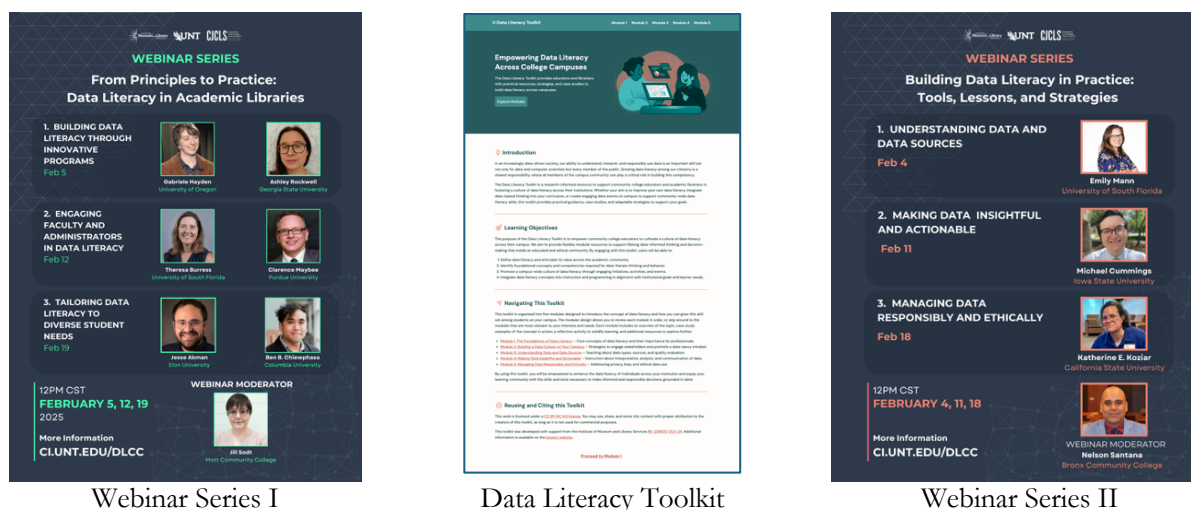


Figure 1. Major deliverables of RE-256673-OLS-24

¹ The project website is accessible at <https://ci.unt.edu/dlcc>

To address these community college librarians' needs, our IMLS-funded initiative (RE-256673-OLS-24) adopted a toolkit development and webinar outreach format modeled after Davis and Subramaniam's ConnectedLib program (see Figure 1 for our initiative's major deliverables). In partnership with ACRL CJCLS, the Data Literacy in Action Webinar Series I and II² were highly successful, drawing approximately 800 to 900 registrants and almost 1,000 live attendees; this confirms a clear and growing demand for data literacy support within the community college library community³. We also developed the **Data Literacy Toolkit**⁴, a research-informed resource designed to support community college librarians through practical guidance, case studies, and adaptable strategies, grounded in the voices and experiences of community college librarians through participatory design. While the webinar series opened the door for librarians to expand their boundaries and the toolkit provides a strong foundation for next steps, the greater challenge lies in supporting librarians in translating what they have learned into concrete practice within their institutions.

Addressing Institutional Needs: Translating Theory into Practice

To address these challenges, this project proposes a **Data Literacy Incubator Program** in which a cohort of community college librarians will adapt the Data Literacy Toolkit into localized implementation models tailored to their institutional communities' needs. It should be noted that a “one-size-fits-all” approach to data literacy in a community college setting would not work, as community colleges vary in the student populations they serve, the major programs they offer, and the existing infrastructure and support systems. Therefore, data literacy initiatives at community colleges must be context-aware and context-dependent; successful implementation should align with the specific vocational goals and academic readiness of their unique student body. We believe this approach is more realistic and practical.

For example, possible adaptation and implementation of the toolkit may include:

- Facilitating an “Industry-Aligned Data Lab” where an invited industry data expert walks students through how data is collected, processed, and used in real-world settings.
- Creating a LibGuide with curated datasets and tutorials on commonly used data analysis and visualization tools, such as Excel, Tableau, or Google Sheets.
- Hosting a “Data Visualization Contest,” inviting students to submit data visualizations from their class assignments or from projects inspired by their own personal interests and creative pursuits.
- Leading a “Data Resume Workshop” to help students identify the data skills hidden in job requirements and show them how to frame their class projects as a data experience.
- Displaying “Data of the Week” infographics in the library lobby and encouraging students to participate in a “Data Scavenger Hunt” that requires using a specific database to answer data-related questions.
- Using the existing embedded librarianship model to work with faculty on a specific course and offer a short lecture on how to find and evaluate reliable data sources, or to redesign an assignment to include data analysis or visualization.

² <https://ci.unt.edu/dlcc/webinars>

³ See also post-webinar survey results at <https://bit.ly/webinarsurveyresults>

⁴ <https://data-literacy-toolkit.github.io>

These are just a few examples of the ways community college librarians can adapt the Data Literacy Toolkit for their campus. We believe some of these implementation approaches can be easily done by community college librarians who may feel they are not “data experts” enough to launch a new data literacy initiative.

To support this process, the project will launch a **Data Literacy Incubator Program** that provides structured guidance and resources to help community college librarians conduct their toolkit implementation projects. By adopting a cohort-based community model, the program will include participants through the following two tracks:

1. **Individual Pioneer Track:** Community college librarians work on their implementation project on their own.
2. **Institutional Team Track:** Small teams of 2-3 community college librarians collaborating as a team on their implementation project within their institution.

This dual-track approach was determined by considering the various staffing structures of two-year community colleges. By having both tracks in a single cohort, the program provides solo librarians with a peer and supporter network while allowing established teams to benefit from the diverse perspectives of librarians at other institutions.

PROJECT WORKPLAN

This project supports the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian program goals and objectives, specifically **Goal 2** and **Objective 2.1**. The proposed project intends to serve the following project goals:

- Goal 1: Empower community college librarians to transition from a theoretical understanding to applied practice by adapting the Data Literacy Toolkit into localized implementation models.
- Goal 2: Cultivate a cohort of community college librarians who advocate the library’s role as a strategic partner in fostering data literacy across their campus.
- Goal 3: Establish a robust social and professional network to sustain data literacy initiatives.

We will prioritize recruiting applicants from historically under-resourced community colleges, including Minority Serving Institutions⁵, rural and geographically isolated institutions, and Title III Part A-eligible colleges⁶. These applicants are prioritized because librarians in those settings often have limited institutional support for their professional growth and sustained networking.

We acknowledge the incremental workload that project activities may require. We also recognize that community college librarians have higher service loads and fewer professional development opportunities. To address this, the project will provide each cohort participant with a stipend for their time commitment and travel support to attend the ACRL or ALA conference. Further, given

⁵ As of 2025, 332 community colleges nationwide are designated as Minority Serving Institutions (<https://access.ucf.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2025/09/2025-List-of-Minority-Serving-Institutions-MSIs-V1.pdf>), nearly one-third of all community colleges.

⁶ <https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/grants-higher-education/improvement-of-postsecondary-education/title-iii-part-programs-strengthening-institutions#home>

the budget constraints often faced by community college libraries, flexible funding will be reserved for each participant's implementation-specific costs, such as promotional materials for campus outreach, printing of toolkit assets, hosting stakeholder meetings, or providing participant incentives for data literacy workshops or events. This ensures that financial barriers do not impede the transition from the Incubator to live campus deployment; refer to the [Budgetjustification.pdf](#) for details.

Project Team

The **Principal Investigator** (PI) will oversee the development and coordination of the Incubator program. The PI will manage the deployment of the toolkit developed in a prior project and guide cohort participants as they adapt it to their specific institutional contexts.

- Jeonghyun (Annie) Kim, Professor of Information Science at UNT, will serve as the PI for this project. Since 2015, Kim has directed and coordinated the Digital Curation and Data Management Graduate Academic Certificate program, developed through an IMLS-funded project in which she served as a co-PI. She is the recipient of the *ASIS&T 2020 Outstanding Information Science Teacher Award*. Kim has directed multiple IMLS-funded projects, including “Students’ data literacy needs in community colleges: Perceptions of librarians, faculty, and students” (RE-252374-OLS-22) and “Building community college library capacity for supporting students’ data literacy needs” (RE-256673-OLS-24). She has served as Editor-in-Chief of *The Electronic Library* journal since 2020.

The **Program Liaisons** will serve as facilitators and peer supporters for the Incubator program. Leveraging their leadership roles as Chair (2025-2026) and Upcoming Chair (2026-2027) of the ACRL Community and Junior College Libraries Section (CJCLS), the program liaisons will support recruitment efforts to identify participants and assist with structured planning or implementation sessions. At the ALA or ACRL conference (depending on timing), they will facilitate a session where cohort participants present their campus-specific toolkit adaptations.

- Nelson Santana is an Associate Professor and Deputy Chief Librarian at Bronx Community College (CUNY). A 2025 recipient of the American Library Association “I Love My Librarian” Award, Nelson serves as Chair of ACRL’s CJCLS (2025-2026) and Vice President/President-Elect of SALALM (2025–26). His work spans grant-funded projects, including the exhibit “Transnational Dominican Activism.” A two-time CUNY graduate, he mentors first-generation students and builds partnerships that connect classrooms, community, and careers. He received his Master of Library and Information Science from Drexel University.
- Christine (Mi-Seon) Kim is Associate Professor & Chief Librarian at Queensborough Community College. Christine serves as Vice Chair (2025-2026) and Chair-Elect (2026-2027) of ACRL’s CJCLS. Christine worked on several projects, including “Integrating a Mission-Aligned Information Literacy Framework into the Science and Engineering/Technology Curriculum in the Community College,” and has published in journals such as *College & Research Libraries*. She received her Master of Library Science from Queens College.

The PI will communicate with Program Liaisons regularly via various communication channels, including email and Zoom meetings. The PI will share quarterly updates on project progress with Program Liaisons, ensuring ongoing alignment, transparency, and effective collaboration throughout the project lifecycle.

Project Activity

Project activities are structured around the following phases:

Phase I: Cohort Recruitment and Selection (Month 1 – Month 2)

In partnership with ACRL CJCLS, the project will recruit a cohort of librarians currently employed at two-year community colleges. Cohort participants will be recruited through the following two tracks: 1) Individual Pioneer Track and 2) Institutional Team Track.

The project team will implement a robust recruitment, application, and selection process to identify a cohort of participants who are professionally dedicated to implementing data literacy on their campus and have the capacity to actively engage in the Incubator program.

The project team will issue an open call for applications in September 2026. This call will be distributed via various professional organization listservs and social media platforms to ensure a broad reach. Additionally, the project team will engage in direct outreach to librarians at targeted community colleges who have been identified as ideal candidates for the cohort. We will also leverage a pre-identified pool of individuals who expressed their interest in participating; during our two-webinar series, conducted as part of our IMLS-funded project (RE-256673-OLS-24), post-webinar surveys collected contact information of librarians who explicitly expressed interest in participating in this next phase. The project team will reach out directly to these individuals to invite them to apply.

Applications will include the applicant's CV and a cover letter expressing why they are interested in participating in the incubator program, what they envision implementing at their respective institution, and what they hope to achieve professionally through the experience. The PI and Program Liaisons will select applicants based on their demonstrated commitment to the program's goals, the feasibility of their proposed implementation plan, and their potential for professional growth. The final cohort list will be determined and announced no later than early November 2026, with selected participants invited to confirm their participation.

Phase II: Onboarding and Implementation Planning (Month 3 – Month 4)

After cohort recruitment, a series of planning sessions will be held to support participants in developing and refining their implementation plans. During an initial orientation session, which will be held in mid-November 2026, the PI will introduce program expectations and the timeframe and share the support system available to participants. The PI will also give a quick walkthrough of the Data Literacy Toolkit and present case studies in the toolkit as applied implementation models.

This will be followed by two planning sessions, held in late November and December 2026, where participants develop and refine their "Implementation Roadmap" through peer support and collaborative feedback before launching implementation in 2027. A fillable Implementation Roadmap template will be provided to help participants plan their implementation project. The template includes 1) a Project Goals section where participants select an implementation model (e.g., embedded librarianship, LibGuide, event-based programming), specify their target audience, and define specific objectives; 2) an Action Plan and Timeline section where participants describe key activities and deliverables; and 3) a Resources and Budget section where participants identify required resources and budget estimate. The first of these planning sessions will be held separately for Individual Pioneers and Institutional Teams to provide tailored peer support. The second session

will bring both Individual Pioneers and the Institutional Teams members together, fostering cross-track exchange.

The PI will lead these sessions, and Program Liaisons will serve as support facilitators to ensure productive dialogue and to support peer-to-peer learning. These planning sessions will be scheduled for a time when all participants are available. While these sessions will be held via Zoom, a dedicated Slack channel will be created and serve as a continuous virtual discussion space where participants can chat and share resources.

The following table outlines the programming for the planning phase.

Table 1. Programmatic Milestones for the Planning Phase

Planning	Goal	Activities	Deliverables
Orientation	Understanding the framework: Participants understand toolkit potential and define their project scope	• Toolkit walkthrough and case study showcase • Expectations, timeline, and Q&A	Drafted Implementation Roadmap
Planning Session I	Refining through peer feedback: Participants share their initial plans	• 5-minute presentation of Implementation Roadmap • Peer feedback breakout rooms	Consulted with local stakeholders
Planning Session II	Finalizing for implementation: Participants identify the support needed to launch	• Challenge discussion and solution mapping • Resource needs and budget structuring	Finalized Implementation Roadmap

Phase III: Implementation and Assessment (Month 5 – Month 9)

Once participants finalize their Implementation Roadmap, they will begin their implementation projects at their institutions. During the entire implementation period, they will be encouraged to stay in close communication with the PI, Program Liaisons, and their peers via the Slack channel to share their progress and discuss any issues they encounter, ensuring each participant stays on track to meet the timeline benchmarks. Additionally, two implementation sessions via Zoom will be held to provide dedicated opportunities for participants to report on their progress and receive feedback and support from the PI, Program Liaisons, and their peers.

Earlier in this period, the PI will host an implementation session via Zoom to share strategies and tips for assessing the success of their implementation, such as creating a survey to collect user engagement metrics, developing a rubric to assess student learning outcomes, or analyzing web analytics for the LibGuides. From this session, participants will select the metric they will use for their implementation project and integrate it into their Implementation Roadmap. At the midpoint of this period, participants will be asked to complete a brief mid-milestone review survey to share their progress and any challenges encountered. The PI will compile the survey results and identify common themes around reported challenges. During the second implementation session, the PI will present these themes, facilitating a group discussion to troubleshoot challenges and share strategies for moving forward.

At the conclusion of the implementation period, participants will submit a final report documenting their implementation experience, assessment findings, and lessons learned.

The following table details the programming of the implementation phase.

Table 2. Programmatic Milestones for the Implementation Phase

Implementation	Goal	Activities	Deliverables
Implementation Session I	Structuring the evaluation: Participants identify relevant assessment tools to measure project success	Presentation of assessment strategies	Refined assessment plan
Midpoint	Monitoring implementation: Participants self-assess their progress	Mid-milestone progress check-in	Completed mid-point survey
Implementation Session II	Addressing implementation challenges: Participants exchange strategies and practical solutions	Peer troubleshooting	Action steps for the next phase of implementation
Conclusion	Finalizing for implementation: Participants identify the support needed to launch	Draft synthesis and reflection	Final implementation report

Phase IV: Playbook Development and Presentation (Month 10 – Month 12)

Following the implementation project, the PI will draft the Data Literacy Toolkit Adaptation Playbook by reflecting on the final reports submitted by each participant. The draft will be shared with cohort participants and program liaisons for their review and feedback. The final online version of the playbook will be added to the existing toolkit on GitHub, and a PDF version of the toolkit will be published in the UNT institutional repository.

While the PI works on the playbook, cohort participants will be encouraged to collaboratively prepare a case study manuscript for journal submission. Groups will be formed based on the type of implementation project. For instance, participants who run event-based programming at their institutions will work together to document each program, its impact, and other key findings. Possible journals to be targeted include those focusing on academic and research library practices or issues, such as the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *College & Research Libraries*, and *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, as well as journals focusing on literacy instruction, such as the *Journal of Information Literacy*, *Communications in Information Literacy*, or *Reference Services Review*. To maximize the manuscript's publication potential, the PI will leverage their expertise as a journal editor to provide direct mentorship and editorial guidance throughout the manuscript writing and preparation process.

As cohort participants finalize the program, they will attend the ALA conference or ACRL conference (depending on timing) to present how they adapted the data literacy toolkit for their campus, what challenges they encountered and how they resolved them, and lessons learned for other institutions. At ACRL, this would take the form of a panel session or roundtable discussion, whereas at ALA, it would be an education program or poster session. Program Liaisons will facilitate such sessions.

PROJECT RESULTS

This project seeks to strengthen and empower the capacity and capability of community college libraries and librarians through the **Data Literacy Incubator Program**, in which selected librarians with an interest in data literacy will participate directly, turning ideas into actionable implementation projects using the **Data Literacy Toolkit**.

Through the structured sessions and peer support, cohort participants will build meaningful professional relationships, engage in collaborative learning, and accelerate their career advancement. The cohort-based model provides access to a network of support beyond their individual institutions, enabling continued connections, engagement, and shared learning even after the program concludes. Furthermore, by engaging closely with Program Liaisons, who are actively exercising their leadership as chair of the ACRL CJCLS, participants will develop enhanced leadership competencies and expand their networks. Whether or not they have previously been active in ACRL CJCLS, participants will be encouraged to engage more fully with the professional community, positioning themselves as mentors and leaders within the broader community college library and academic librarianship field.

Additionally, as part of the project, cohort participants will present their toolkit implementation cases and lessons learned at conferences, such as ALA or ACRL. Participants will also be encouraged to develop these experiences into journal articles, sharing best practices that promote data literacy and enhance student success with a broader audience. By generating and disseminating these publications and presentations, the project will not only inspire community college librarians to contribute to the scholarship of the library field but also help address the relative scarcity of literature focused specifically on community college libraries.

Beyond the cohort, this project will serve the broader community of community college libraries and librarians by providing an expanded **Data Literacy Toolkit**, including the **Data Literacy Toolkit Adaptation Playbook**, a major deliverable of this project, to support the implementation of data literacy initiatives on their own campuses. The toolkit will serve as a practical guide for community college librarians, enabling them to integrate these practices successfully into their programs and services. Such initiatives will ultimately position them to serve as strategic actors in advancing students' data literacy within their institutions, supporting academic success, workforce readiness, and lifelong learning.

Schedule of Completion

Year 1

Activity	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Project Initiation												
Hire student assistant												
Convene program liaisons												
Cohort Recruitment and Selection												
Develop cohort recruitment/marketing plan												
Create marketing materials												
Launch recruitment and accept applications												
Review applications and select cohort participants												
Onboard cohort participants												
The Implementation Incubator												
Host cohort orientation session												
Facilitate planning sessions for developing Implementation Roadmap												
Execute toolkit implementation at participant institutions												
Facilitate implementation sessions for executing Implementation Roadmap												
Evaluate implementation outcomes through reflection and case data collection												
Synthesis and Dissemination												
Draft/Refine the Data Literacy Toolkit Adaptation Playbook												
Publish the final playbook via GitHub and UNT Scholarly Works												
Present findings in a collaborative showcase session at ALA												