



LAURA BUSH 21st CENTURY LIBRARIAN PROGRAM

Sample Application RE-259616-OLS-26
Project Category: National Implementation

Montana State University

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$707,924
Amount of cost share:	\$462,623

Montana State University, in collaboration with the Center for Research on Rural Education and statewide mentorship programs in Montana and Alaska, will address persistent shortages of certified school librarians in rural communities. This three-year project will conduct a regional needs assessment, develop and pilot an evidence-based toolkit for rural school administrators, and recruit and support 16 teacher-librarian candidates. The project will equip districts with practical strategies and resources, such as recruitment guides, certification pathway maps, and mentoring tools to prepare existing teachers for librarian roles. By producing both newly certified librarians and a freely accessible toolkit, the project will strengthen rural library staffing, expand students' access to high-quality information literacy instruction, and build workforce capacity across participating states and beyond.

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.

Rural Initiative for School Librarian Education (RISE) Project Narrative

Introduction

The Montana State University (MSU) Library Media Certificate (LMC) Program (Deborah Rinio, PI) and Center for Research on Rural Education seek \$695,825 in IMLS funds and will provide \$362,751 in cost share from MSU, MentorMT, and the Alaska Statewide Mentorship Project to establish the Rural Initiative for School Librarian Education (RISE), a three-year project to develop a sustainable, evidence-based Grow-Your-Own School Librarian Toolkit for Rural School Administrators and pilot it with 16 rural principal/educator teams across Alaska and Montana. The toolkit will equip rural districts with practical tools to identify, recruit, prepare, and retain certified school librarians. Use of the toolkit will address persistent workforce shortages that limit K-12 students' access to robust school library collections and quality information literacy instruction in underserved communities. RISE adapts the evidence-based Grow-Your-Own (GYO) educator development model—widely validated in teacher workforce research—to the field of school librarianship, addressing LB21 Program Goal 1, Objective 1.2 by enhancing institutional capacity to educate and retain future school library professionals.

Project Justification

The Problem: Rural School Librarian Workforce Shortages

Rural districts in Montana and Alaska face persistent shortages of certified school librarians, operating far below the American Library Association's recommended 1.0 FTE per school. Montana has an average of 0.43 FTE across the state, and Alaska experiences an average of 0.26 FTE school librarians statewide (Curry Lance, 2025). Montana has also experienced a 5.4% decline in librarian positions between 2022 and 2024 (Curry Lance, 2025).

Over 30% of Alaska's and 44% of Montana's residents live in rural communities, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service State Fact Sheets. Further, 25.9% of Alaska's students and 40% of Montana's students are considered rural, and 69.8% of Alaska's school districts and 93.4% of Montana's districts are considered small rural districts (*Why Rural Matters 2025: State-by-State Results*, n.d.). Many rural schools are geographically isolated, which impacts the ability to develop professional learning communities. Unfortunately, teacher and librarian training and professional development can often be difficult to access, as travel for graduate-level programs and professional development is expensive, time-consuming, and often impossible during the school year.

This shortage, combined with limited access to professional learning, negatively affects rural students. Many small and rural schools rely on paraprofessionals, classroom teachers, or untrained staff to manage library programs, an arrangement that limits students' access to robust school library collections and high-quality information literacy instruction, and inhibits districts' capacity to meet evolving community information needs (Mtodana-Zide & Chimbi, 2025; Perryman & Jeng, 2020). Research demonstrates that certified school librarians increase standardized test scores, boost graduation rates, and improve information literacy skills (Lance & Kachel, 2018). Moreover, schools that employ certified school librarians experience improved teacher lesson preparation, increased learner engagement, curriculum differentiation, and reduced resource scarcity (Perryman & Jeng, 2020). Yet many administrators lack guidance about the responsibilities, expectations, and instructional contributions of a certified librarian (Pickett & Combs, 2016), leading to inconsistent hiring practices, unclear job descriptions, and limited long-term workforce planning. Many Montana school districts have sought variances from the state's legal

requirements for school librarian positions (*Approved Applications & Meeting Materials*, 2025). In Montana, the [Montana Small Schools Alliance](#) works to meet the needs of small schools by having a certified librarian on staff who serves as a remote consultant. While this approach does provide some rural-relevant resources for teachers and allows schools to meet the state's accreditation standards, students still do not have a well-prepared librarian in place to guide them and support their learning.

Rural recruitment is particularly challenging. Many teachers are unable or unwilling to relocate to rural communities, and administrators often cite budget pressures as reasons for not retaining or hiring certified librarians. A national survey of school administrators identified three primary reasons for eliminating or reducing librarian positions: changing priorities, budget constraints, and inability to find qualified candidates (Curry Lance et al., 2023). Despite the success of GYO models in addressing teacher shortages, no evaluated or evidence-based GYO model currently exists for school library staffing, leaving rural administrators without guidance.

Why a Grow-Your-Own School Librarian Toolkit for Rural School Administrators?

A Grow-Your-Own (GYO) approach addresses the core problem: rather than recruiting external candidates who may not relocate or remain in the community, districts can develop their own pipeline of certified librarians from among existing teachers. Additionally, in small districts with tight budgets, GYO school librarian programs allow schools to employ a certified school librarian at a lower cost. Rather than employing a full- or half-time certified librarian, a teacher already employed at the school obtains their certification and then runs the library using release time or an extra-duty contract. This may coincide with having a full- or part-time paraprofessional staffed in the library to do clerical work and check books in and out. This approach allows schools with limited resources to still retain the expertise of a school librarian for collection development, information literacy instruction, and resource support for teachers.

GYO programs have successfully addressed teacher shortages nationally (Carl & Seelig, 2025), but their application to school librarianship remains underdeveloped. Isolated successes in Anchorage and Oklahoma City (*OKCPS Continues "Grow Our Own School Librarian" Program*, 2018) show promise, but no evaluated model or implementation toolkit exists.

Unlike teacher GYO programs, which leverage paraprofessionals and existing credential structures, school librarian GYO programs focus on equipping certified teachers with specialized knowledge in information literacy instruction, collection development, and school library administration. As typically isolated positions, new school librarians require tailored mentoring and professional learning communities, elements missing from current practice. In small rural schools where hiring a full-time librarian is not feasible, training an existing teacher to serve as a part-time GYO librarian (e.g., 0.25 FTE school librarian, 0.75 FTE classroom teacher) can both improve academic outcomes and prevent worsening teacher shortages.

RISE directly addresses this gap by combining evidence-based workforce development practices and school library impact research to create a replicable, multi-state Grow-Your-Own model designed for rural and remote contexts. The resulting toolkit will provide rural school leaders with concrete, practical tools they can use to support teachers seeking to serve as school librarians in their schools. Informed by a needs assessment, the toolkit will include recruitment guides, state-specific certification pathway maps, role descriptions distinguishing paraprofessionals from certified librarians, mentoring and onboarding templates, administrator guidance on

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librarian evaluation and expectations, candidate-readiness assessments, and district self-assessment instruments for planning and sustainability.

Connection to and support from the well-established [state-wide MentorMT program](#) and the [Alaska Statewide Mentorship Project](#) will also provide pilot-testing participants with trained and experienced mentors, targeted professional-development resources, and a robust networking community that accelerates their preparation for—and success in—rural school librarian roles.

Toolkits have been shown to provide essential training, resources, and community-building opportunities for rural library staff (Boelens & Van Dam, 2021). Further, this approach is more sustainable than temporary incentives. While direct financial incentives (e.g., salary supplements) temporarily address financial barriers, a well-designed toolkit builds systemic district capacity to continuously identify, support, and retain qualified school librarians, creating lasting workforce development.

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Alignment

This project directly supports IMLS priorities to develop alternative pathways into the library profession and to strengthen library services in rural and remote communities. RISE directly addresses the IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Objective 1.2: “Enhance institutional capacity to educate and retain future library professionals, particularly in underserved regions.” By creating a scalable, evidence-based GYO model with an accompanying toolkit designed specifically for rural schools, RISE advances IMLS’s vision of a well-prepared library workforce capable of supporting community learning in rural and remote areas.

Institutional Partners & Program Credibility

The MSU Library Media Certificate Program is ideally positioned to lead this work. Operating continuously since 1978, the program has earned a national and international reputation for excellence and access. It serves as a Master’s-level endorsement program for K-12 school librarian certification, fully aligning with the American Library Association / American Association of School Librarians / CAEP Standards. The program operates entirely online and asynchronously, accommodating working educators across geographic distances. Current enrollment is 18-30 students annually, with approximately one-third from Alaska, 10% from Oregon/Washington/Wyoming and international students, and the remainder from Montana, a distribution that aligns with RISE’s focus.

From 2020-2023, the LMC Program received an IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Community Catalyst Grant and revised program curriculum to include Indigenous perspectives and culturally relevant pedagogy, ensuring that all candidates, regardless of background, are prepared to serve diverse learners equitably. This curriculum has positioned the program to seek AASL National Recognition through CAEP SPA accreditation.

MSU’s Center for Research on Rural Education is well-positioned to provide essential partnership and support to ensure the success of the RISE project. The CRRE combines deep, interdisciplinary expertise in rural education with an established infrastructure for data-driven research, policy translation, and workforce development. The Center also has 10 years of established operational resources and community trust required to turn the proposed activities into sustainable, scalable outcomes for rural schools across Montana and Alaska. The CRRE’s faculty includes nationally recognized scholars in education and Indigenous studies, all of whom have a proven track record of securing and managing multi-year federal and state grants that address rural teacher and librarian

Dr. Deborah Rinio, Department of Education, EHHD, Montana State University, *Rural Initiative for School Librarian Education (RISE)*

shortages. The CRRE is dedicated to the work of knowledge translation and ensuring that findings are promptly disseminated to policymakers, district leaders, and national professional networks, thereby amplifying the grant's impact beyond the pilot sites.

Principal Investigator Dr. Deborah Rinio brings exceptional credentials: she is an Associate Teaching Professor with three years of program leadership experience, received the 2026 MSU Award for Excellence in Online Teaching, and serves as the Professional Development Coordinator for the Alaska Association of School Libraries. She served on the AASL Standards & Guidelines Committee that wrote the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, and is currently serving on the committee charged with producing educational materials to support the 2nd edition of the book. She has prior experience managing an IMLS grant (IMLS RE-246303-OLS-20), adding to her exceptional qualifications to lead RISE.

Co-PI's Dr. Laura Schlottman and Dr. Jayne Downey bring important perspectives and experience to the project. Dr. Schlottman brings extensive K-12 leadership experience, having served as a teacher, principal, and superintendent, with a strong focus on instructional supervision and coaching-centered leadership models. She is currently a faculty member in Educational Leadership, where her work centers on strengthening administrator practice through observation, feedback, and non-evaluative instructional coaching aligned to professional frameworks. Dr. Jayne Downey is a Professor of Educational Psychology and serves as the Director of the Center for Research on Rural Education. Dr. Downey has been an active leader and researcher in rural education for over 25 years. Her scholarship centers on preparing and mentoring teachers and counselors to thrive in rural schools and communities and on improving outcomes for rural students. Dr. Downey has been awarded over \$21 million in research funding, producing over 50 publications and more than 150 research presentations at regional, national, and international conferences.

The MSU LMC program is accredited by Montana OPI as an approved endorsement pathway. In Alaska, it meets special service area requirements with institutional recommendation. This multi-state accreditation is critical to toolkit relevance and applicability. These two states were chosen for their similarities and allow us to build on the work done in our previous IMLS grant. Additionally, by focusing our reach on two specific states, we can ensure the toolkit is effective across multiple contexts and meet the support needs of scholarship recipients. A larger cohort of students from the same state will ensure effective peer support.

Project Work Plan

Under Dr. Rinio's leadership and in partnership with Co-PIs Dr. Laura Schlottman and Dr. Jayne Downey and an Advisory Board of rural administrators, school librarians, and teacher educators from MT and AK, RISE will execute six integrated activities:

A. Establish and regularly engage an Advisory Board (Ongoing, Sep 2026 – Aug 2029)

An Advisory Board composed of eight rural school administrators and librarians from Alaska and Montana will guide all phases of the project (see Supporting Document 2). Coordinated by the PI, the Board will meet three times annually (Fall, Spring, and Summer) via synchronous virtual meetings, with asynchronous communication and materials review between meetings. The Advisory Board will:

Dr. Deborah Rinio, Department of Education, EHHD, Montana State University, *Rural Initiative for School Librarian Education (RISE)*

- Inform the needs assessment design and interpretation
- Provide feedback on initial toolkit drafts
- Ensure toolkit components address real-world barriers and district priorities
- Review evaluation instruments
- Support recruitment and stakeholder engagement

B. Conduct a regional workforce and needs assessment (Oct 2026 – Dec 2026)

PI Rinio, Co-PI Schlottman, and the GRA will develop and conduct a mixed-methods needs assessment to establish a clear understanding of current school library staffing, certification barriers, recruitment challenges, and district readiness across Alaska and Montana. The assessment will include:

- Surveys of 50-60 school administrators stratified by state and rural/remote status on recruitment barriers, understanding of school librarian roles, certification challenges, and current staffing models
- Semi-structured interviews with 20-25 administrators and school librarians to explore barriers, facilitators, and GYO interest
- An environmental scan of existing GYO programs (Anchorage ASD, Oklahoma City Public Schools, others) and extraction of lessons learned
- Reviews of state certification requirements and approval processes
- Site visits to rural districts (where feasible) to build relationships and gather qualitative context

This needs assessment will inform toolkit design and strengthen district partnerships.

C. Develop a multi-state grow-your-own school librarian toolkit (Jan 2027 – Apr 2027)

RISE will adapt GYO best practices (*Strategies for Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating Grow-Your-Own Teacher Programs for Educators*, 2017) to the specialized needs of school librarians by focusing on certified teachers rather than paraprofessionals, sharing evaluation models for librarians (which are distinct from teacher models), and providing support for individuals in isolated roles.

The toolkit aims to assist school administrators in supporting their interested teachers in developing into part-time librarians. Building on research and the results of the needs assessment, program staff will develop at least eight core toolkit components, including:

1. Recruitment guides for identifying and recruiting potential school librarians from existing teacher pools
2. State-specific certification pathway maps (MT, AK) clarifying steps, requirements, and timelines
3. Role descriptions distinguishing certified librarians from paraprofessionals, with clear expectations and instructional contributions
4. Templates for mentor training and provision of mentoring to generate rich and timely support for candidate cohorts
5. Onboarding resources for new school librarians, including curriculum modules and orientation checklists
6. Administrator guidance documents on librarian evaluation, role expectations, and integration into school improvement efforts
7. Candidate and administrator readiness assessments to screen applicants and support self-reflection
8. District self-assessment instruments for planning and long-term sustainability

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The toolkit development will be iterative. Initial drafts (Jan – April 2027) will incorporate findings from the needs assessment and Advisory Board feedback. The Advisory Board's feedback and the Co-PI's evaluative work will guide the initial revision. Pilot testing and post-pilot test surveys and interviews will inform final revisions. The final toolkit will be published in January 2029 to the Montana Rural Teaching Resource Hub and disseminated as part of ongoing recruitment efforts.

D. Recruit and Support 16 Scholarship Recipient Teams (Apr 2027 – Aug 2028)

To reduce financial barriers for aspiring school librarians and to pilot-test the RISE toolkit, the project will recruit 16 teams of administrators and prospective library candidates (8 in MT and 8 in AK). Each participating school will identify one teacher who will receive a full scholarship covering tuition, fees, and required textbooks for the Library Media Certificate (LMC) Program, along with travel support to attend their state library conference. Conference participation allows candidates to deepen their professional knowledge, build statewide networks, and engage in face-to-face collaboration with peers and mentors.

To ensure administrators are well-prepared and supported, RISE staff will host an online launch training, and school administrators will be enrolled in a three-semester online professional development course, including four virtual meetings and discussion forums for continuous support.

Participating school administrators will also receive a modest stipend to acknowledge the additional work involved in pilot testing the toolkit, as well as funding to attend their state principals' conference to share successes, discuss implementation strategies, and amplify project outcomes within their professional communities. Co-PI Schlottman and PI Rinio will develop the curriculum for the professional development course, which will be taught by an MSU Education Leadership faculty member.

Recruitment strategies will include:

- Announcements through school library listservs and state department of education newsletters
- Direct outreach to rural school principals, encouraging nominations of promising teachers
- Site visits to rural districts (where feasible)
- A live recruitment webinar for administrators to ask questions and learn about project goals
- Outreach through Advisory Board networks and contacts

Participating administrators will agree to:

- Use RISE toolkit components to identify, support, and evaluate school library candidates
- Attend regularly scheduled video conference meetings for training and ongoing support
- Provide feedback on candidate progress during and after completion of the LMC program
- Attend their state principals conference following pilot implementation
- Provide release time for library candidates to attend their state library conference
- Participate in RISE evaluation surveys and interviews

The MSU LMC Program itself provides comprehensive support structures for all library candidates, including:

- Academic advising from the Program Advisor
- Structured mentor meetings with a trained and matched school librarian mentor

Dr. Deborah Rinio, Department of Education, EHHD, Montana State University, *Rural Initiative for School Librarian Education (RISE)*

- Access to the LMC Community on Canvas, which serves a resource hub and space for community building
- Optional monthly LMC Think Tank meetings where candidates collaboratively problem-solve program and school-based challenges

Although candidates typically begin the 21-credit LMC program in any semester and progress at a pace suited to their personal needs, scholarship recipients will begin in Fall 2027 and complete the program by the end of Summer 2028. The curriculum emphasizes project-based learning, application of AASL standards in authentic school contexts, and completion of required teaching/instructional components aligned with accreditation standards.

Beyond standard program support, RISE library candidates will have access to a dedicated RISE Cohort Community within Canvas for optional asynchronous discussions and synchronous meetings to strengthen peer learning and resource sharing.

Library candidates will also receive mentorship during the program and in the year following graduation to ensure continuous support during the transition to their new role. MentorMT will utilize existing models that have proven successful throughout rural Montana and will provide trained mentors for Montana candidates, while the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project will support candidates in Alaska. In both states, mentors will receive extensive training and support in their roles to ensure high-quality support for mentees.

All RISE library candidates will also receive funding to attend their state library conference. This professional learning experience will expand their skills beyond the LMC curriculum, strengthen connections with other librarians managing similar challenges, and offer in-person networking opportunities for members of the RISE cohort.

E. Evaluate Project Effectiveness (Ongoing, with emphasis in Year 2 and Year 3)

Co-PI Schlottman will oversee a rigorous mixed-methods evaluation guided by the RISE Project Evaluation Matrix (Supporting Document 1), aligned with IMLS performance of effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and timeliness:

1. Workforce & Needs Assessment (Year 1): Baseline understanding of staffing patterns, barriers, and district readiness
2. Toolkit Development & Design (Year 1–2): Validation of toolkit components, relevance, and accessibility
3. Scholarship Cohort Recruitment & Support (Year 1–2): Recruitment reach, candidate persistence, and support adequacy
4. Administrator Outcomes (Year 2–3): Changes in administrator understanding of librarian roles and toolkit adoption rates
5. Dissemination & Field Impact (Year 3+): Reach and uptake of toolkit by non-participant districts
6. Overall Project Outcomes (Year 3): Goal attainment, implementation fidelity, and lessons learned

Data collection methods include surveys (administrator role understanding, toolkit usability, candidate support adequacy), interviews (recruitment barriers, facilitators to adoption, implementation experiences), focus groups (cohort reflection), employment tracking (12-month post-completion), and case studies (2–4 administrators

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implementing the toolkit). Co-PI Schlottman will prepare annual reports for the PI team for formative decision-making and a comprehensive final report documenting project outcomes.

F. Disseminate Toolkit and Project Findings (Mar 2029 – Aug 2029)

Dissemination is strategic and multi-channel:

- PI and Co-PIs will present at state-level library association conferences (Alaska, Montana) to share results and encourage librarians to share the toolkit with administrators
- PI or Co-PI will present at regional and national library conferences to share project outcomes with a broader audience
- Program staff will submit research manuscripts to peer-reviewed journals serving rural educators, administrators, and school librarians (e.g., *School Library Research*, *The Rural Educator*, *Journal of Educational Administration*).
- The toolkit will be posted to the [Rural Teaching Resource Hub](#) website to ensure a broad reach and submitted to AASL for inclusion on the AASL Standards website.
- The PI and Co-PI, Schlottman, will work with MSU Educational Leadership faculty to integrate a module into the EDLD 508: Supervision of Instruction course on supporting school librarians that features the toolkit.
- Ongoing post-grant: The toolkit will be shared via state library listservs and ALA Connect. During annual MSU LMC recruitment outreach, administrators will receive the toolkit as a resource to identify and support potential candidates.

Timeline

The Schedule of Completion provides month-by-month details of implementation. Broadly:

- Year 1 (Sep 2026 – Aug 2027): Convene Advisory Board; conduct needs assessment; develop initial toolkit; recruit administrators and scholarship cohort
- Year 2 (Sep 2027 – Aug 2028): Administrators receive toolkit training; Scholarship cohort begins and progresses through LMC program (Fall 2027, Spring 2028, Summer 2028); Administrator support throughout library candidate program completion; develop evaluation survey and interview protocols
- Year 3 (Sep 2028 – Aug 2029): Administer toolkit feedback surveys and interviews, analyze evaluation data, revise the toolkit based on findings and post to the [Rural Teaching Resource Hub](#), prepare and submit journal articles, present at conferences, develop a module for an Educational Leadership course, and complete the final IMLS report

Project Results

Primary Deliverables

RISE will produce two major deliverables:

1. 16 newly certified school librarians: Graduation of 16 teachers from the MSU LMC program, each positioned to serve rural students and communities across Montana and Alaska. This directly increases the rural school library workforce and serves as proof of concept for the GYO model.

2. Grow-Your-Own School Librarian Toolkit for Rural School Administrators: A comprehensive, research-based, freely available toolkit for rural school leaders containing practical templates, guides, assessments, and resources that rural school districts can use to build and sustain their own GYO programs.

How Results Address the Need

The 16 scholarship recipients will directly reduce school librarian shortages in their home districts and demonstrate the viability of the GYO approach. Their success will provide case studies for the toolkit and evidence of the model's effectiveness.

The toolkit will enable districts beyond RISE's direct reach to build their own GYO pipelines. By removing barriers (lack of knowledge, unclear pathways, and the absence of templates), the toolkit empowers rural administrators to identify and support existing teachers in pursuing school librarianship, thereby creating a sustainable, cost-effective workforce development strategy.

Toolkit Reach and Replicability

The robust design and pilot testing of the Grow Your Own School Librarian Toolkit for Rural School Administrators will ensure it is ready for independent use by rural school administrators nationwide. To ensure broad reach, the toolkit will have the following features:

- Free, online access: Posted on the Montana Rural Teaching Resource Hub, AASL Standards website (if accepted), and shared via state library listservs and email networks
- Multi-format: Available as editable templates, printable guides, and web-based resources
- Plain-language design: Written for school administrators (principals, superintendents, curriculum directors), not librarians, with clear step-by-step guidance
- Accessibility: Designed to WCAG 2.1 AA standards, ensuring usability by administrators with varying technical abilities

To ensure that rural districts outside of Alaska and Montana can adapt the toolkit effectively, it will be licensed under a Creative Commons attribution, non-commercial, share-alike (CC BY-NC-SA) license and made available as both a PDF and an editable document for easy modification.

Dissemination of Results

During Year 3 (Sep 2028 – Aug 2029)

- Present findings at Alaska and Montana state library association annual conferences (audience: ~ 200-300 school librarians per state)
- Present findings at American Library Association annual conference (audience: ~18,000 attendees)
- Submit research articles to *School Library Research* (primary research journal for school librarians), *The Rural Educator* (reaches rural school administrators and teachers), and *Journal of Educational Administration* (reaches K-12 administrators)

Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

The toolkit's design emphasizes sustainability beyond the grant period:

- **Institutional Support:** CRRE's Rural Teaching Resource Hub will serve as the long-term home for the toolkit, ensuring continuity and updates long after the completion of the grant. The LMC Program Leader will maintain the toolkit, update state-specific components when certification requirements change, and respond to district inquiries about implementation.
- **Community of Practice:** RISE will establish a virtual community of practice connecting school leaders using the GYO approach. Annual virtual convenings (1-2 hours) will allow administrators to share implementation experiences, troubleshoot challenges, and refine toolkit components. This ongoing peer support sustains momentum beyond grant funding.
- **Capacity Building:** RISE will help to cultivate long-term rural school library champions. Participants, Advisory Board members, and administrators who understand the program's impact, rural student needs, and the nuances of local budgeting, will be equipped to ensure ongoing advocacy for resources and positions. Champions will be able to translate outcomes into budgets and recurring funding streams.
- **Alignment with State Requirements:** Where applicable, the toolkit is organized by state, and compliance with certification requirements is built in. When states update requirements, toolkit components can be updated without redesigning the entire toolkit.
- **Integration into Program Operations:** The MSU LMC Program already recruits and supports candidates from rural areas nationwide. The toolkit will become part of routine recruitment materials, ensuring it reaches new candidates and their administrators annually. This integration makes sustainability a function of program operations rather than external funding.
- **Evidence of Impact:** Year 4-5 follow-up surveys (conducted by MSU with existing program resources) will track employment outcomes of RISE cohort members, document districts adopting toolkit components, and gather impact awareness. This ongoing evaluation will strengthen future funding proposals if additional resources are needed.

Projected Impact

Direct Impact (Years 1 – 3, Sep 2026 – Aug 2029): 16 newly certified librarians serving an estimated 200-300 students each (based on typical rural school populations), totaling 3,200 – 4,800 students with direct access to high-quality information literacy instruction by 2029.

Field Impact (Year 3+, Aug 2028 onward): With conservative adoption estimates, if 10% of rural districts nationwide implement one or more toolkit components within five years, the toolkit could indirectly support the development of 50-75 additional school librarians, reaching 10,000 – 22,500 students. Even if adoption is lower, the toolkit provides a reliable, evidence-based model addressing a critical national shortage.

Knowledge Impact: Publications in peer-reviewed journals will contribute empirical evidence on the efficacy of GYO approaches for school librarianship, filling a significant research gap, and informing national discourse on rural workforce development.

Schedule of Completion: Year One

Activities	Sep-26	Oct-26	Nov-26	Dec-26	Jan-27	Feb-27	Mar-27	Apr-27	May-27	Jun-27	Jul-27	Aug-27
Year 1 Fall Advisory Board Meeting												
Needs Assessment & GYO Environ. Scan												
Year 1 Spring Advisory Board Meeting												
Develop Toolkit												
Toolkit Quality Assurance Review & Accessibility Audit												
Recruitment Survey												
Recruit Scholarship Cohort												
Year 1 Summer Advisory Board Meeting												
MentorMT Mentor Training												
Review Scholarship Cohort Applications & Communicate Decisions												
Scholarship Cohort Orientation for Administrators												
Administrator Pre-Survey												

Schedule of Completion: Year Two

Activities	Sep-27	Oct-27	Nov-27	Dec-27	Jan-28	Feb-28	Mar-28	Apr-28	May-28	Jun-28	Jul-28	Aug-28
ASMP Mentor Training												
Year 2 Fall Advisory Board Meeting												
Scholarship Cohort Fall (1st) Semester												
Admin. PD Course Fall (1st) Semester												
Scholarship Cohort Semester Check-Ins												
Administrator Cohort Support Meetings												
Administrator Check In Toolkit Usage Surveys												
Year 2 Spring Advisory Board Meeting												
Develop Toolkit Feedback Survey & Interview Protocol												
Scholarship Cohort Spring (2nd) Semester												
Admin. PD Course Spring (2nd) Semester												
Scholarship Candidates Attend State Conferences												
Year 2 Summer Advisory Board Meeting												
Scholarship Cohort Summer (Final) Semester												
Admin. PD Course Summer (Final) Semester												
Scholarship Candidate Final Performance Review & Toolkit Usage Comparative Analysis												
Administrator Post-Survey												

Schedule of Completion: Year Three

Activities	Sep-28	Oct-28	Nov-28	Dec-28	Jan-29	Feb-29	Mar-29	Apr-29	May-29	Jun-29	Jul-29	Aug-29
Year 3 Fall Advisory Board Meeting												
Administrators Attend State Conferences												
Administrator Toolkit Usage Case Studies												
Interview Cohort Participants												
Analyze Cohort Evaluation												
Revise Toolkit												
Year 3 Spring Advisory Board Meeting												
Post Toolkit to MT Rural Teaching Resource Hub												
Develop Module for EDLD 508												
Prepare & Submit Articles to Professional Journals												
Present at AK and MT Lib Assoc Annual Conferences												
Year 3 Summer Advisory Board Meeting												
Present at ALA Annual Conference												
Scholarship Cohort Post-Completion Employment Survey												
Retrieve Toolkit Download Count												
Complete Final IMLS Report												