

GATHERING IDEAS FOR FUTURE STATEWIDE PROJECTS 2014

The Library Council of Washington is looking for your help in identifying ideas for the use of federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding to meet statewide library needs and opportunities.

Project name (a short descriptive title)

Washington State eBook Equity Project

Library, group, or person submitting proposal Andrew Harbison

Library Name, if different The Seattle Public Library

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1. Briefly describe your idea for the use of LSTA funding (limit your response to approximately ½ page):

Technology, publishing, and reading behavior have all changed dramatically in a very short period of time. While eBooks quickly rise in availability and demand, libraries struggle with the high costs, licensing restrictions, and proprietary platforms associated with them. The result has diminished library purchasing power, collections, and accessibility.

LSTA funding can subsidize an investigation of opportunities for the Washington State Library to assume a leadership role in addressing the challenges libraries face with eBooks in the interest of increasing access to eBook content and offsetting the collective costs to libraries and their communities.

The Statewide Database Licensing Project is an example of the role the Washington State Library plays in ensuring access to electronic resources. The WSL is, similarly, well positioned to assume a role in advocating for more equitable eBook playing field while building statewide eBook collections.

This idea is largely inspired by the Massachusetts eBook Project, which is a pilot project to cooperate with vendors to “explore different models for eBook lending, different platforms and user experiences.” This pilot employs a collective strategy for its fifty-one participating libraries to acquire and circulate a shared, statewide eBook collection. By coordinating a combined voice to express library interests and concerns, this statewide initiative leverages resources and purchasing power to address inequities in the eBook market. While the Massachusetts eBook Project is only a pilot, it has the potential to expand beyond its state

lines with additional funding. The Washington State Library has an opportunity to realize similar benefit for its libraries by partnering with Massachusetts libraries, by exploring similar consortial models with vendors, or by discovering new eBook acquisition and distribution strategies.

2. Briefly describe why funding of this idea is important to the Washington library community (limit your response to approximately ½ page):

All libraries are experiencing challenges with eBooks whether they offer them or not. In the same way that subscription database pricing can limit the ability of some libraries to provide access to these resources to users, there is an opportunity to address similar eBook challenges on a statewide scope. The Washington library community stands to benefit by building and enhancing their collections of eBook content, thereby promoting literacy and advancing library services. By doing so, Washington libraries will be more responsive and relevant to industry and consumer trends, while also ensuring those trends are reflected in even and equal distribution of resources to users across the state.

Libraries and librarians can contribute to this initiative by developing and evaluating models, collecting feedback amongst libraries and library patrons, and participating in the development of licensing terms and collections. These eBook collections could be developed to support, specifically, applied literacy such as legal research, health information, employment/job searching, and politics and could also be targeted to specific underserved audiences. One of the advantages to a well-developed eBook collection, however, is that it has the potential to reach many audiences – early learners, students, researchers, educators, lifelong learners – without the traditional barriers of time and place.

3. Briefly describe the outcome that is expected should the idea be funded. In other words, how will we know if the project has been successful and has achieved its goals? (limit your response to approximately ½ page):

This first phase of this project should be considered as exploratory with the goal of producing recommendations and proposals for further funding to enable the recommended direction. A successful project will, therefore, produce a well-researched report that explores different examples and models for achieving more equitable statewide access to eBook resources and services, and settles on the model that would work best for Washington state libraries. The successful final recommendation would be one that can meet the eBook needs of participating libraries, attract and be funded by future LSTA monies, and be sustained as a WSL service offering.

General Information

Which library types are intended as the primary beneficiaries of this project? (check all that apply)

- Academic (private and public two-year and four-year academic institutions)
 Public (libraries organized under RCW 27.12)
 School (private and public K-12 schools)
 Special (business and industry, law, medical, other government, tribal, other)

If other, specify: _____

The intended beneficiaries of the project? (check the primary beneficiary)

- Library staff
 Library users or potential library users
 A specific group of staff or users, or a potential user group. Name the target beneficiaries(s): educators and students
(e.g., children, adults, disadvantaged, remote access library users, unserved community members, reference staff, IT staff, students)

The activities needed to implement this project are envisioned to include (check all that apply):

- User training
 Staff training
 Grants
 Development of best practices
 Demonstration of emerging technology or practices
 Other, please explain:

Considering the outcome desired, how long should the project continue? 1 year
(Note that most projects are from one year to four years in length.)

Which Library Council areas of focus support the idea you are submitting (check all that apply)

1. Advance applied literacy in the state of Washington in areas such as legal research, health information, employment/job searching, and developing civic/voter education resources.
2. Enhance libraries relevancy in a democratic society.
3. Serve underserved, unserved, and culturally diverse communities and populations.