

## **GATHERING IDEAS FOR FUTURE STATEWIDE PROJECTS**

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.

**Number: 07-GI-11**

**Idea name: Training for Staff of Washington State Libraries**

---

### **1. Briefly describe your idea for the use of LSTA funding:**

I would like to see the Washington State Library be more deeply involved in facilitating in-person training opportunities for staff of Washington libraries of all types, in particular, public and academic. By facilitating, I mean arranging for qualified instructors to teach classes, rather than expecting WSL staff would deliver the instruction. And I do appreciate that WSL offers a variety of online training opportunities as well as the College of DuPage teleconferences. But some people and/or subjects benefit most from an in-person approach.

Conduct a training needs assessment to determine the types of training that staff need / want to receive, then contract for trainers to deliver classes at 3-5 sites across the state. Use computer training labs to offer some classes that are hands-on courses, perhaps designed to help library staff utilize statewide databases. Offer classes on copyright or disaster planning, or whatever is requested by people during the needs assessment. But fund this program with enough money so you can take the classes to many locations and enable libraries to send staff without having to invest a lot in travel time and costs. The classes should be fee-based, but reasonable enough, perhaps just enough to cover the cost of an on-site lunch in order to optimize the training time. I am basing this suggestion on the way the State Library of North Carolina offers training for library staff, and would be very willing to elaborate if you want more details.

### **2. Briefly describe why funding of this idea is important to the Washington library community:**

When training is offered in only one or two locations, it makes it very challenging for libraries, especially libraries with limited budgets, to send staff. Often it might involve an overnight stay, if the training starts early in the morning. And even if people get up and drive starting at 5:00 or 6:00 a.m., the cost of traveling 200-300 miles or more round-trip can be prohibitive. If the training sessions were routinely offered at multiple locations, it would make access more equitable.

Some sessions might warrant a blanketing of the state within a short period. For example, if a speaker is brought in to do a program that is time-sensitive, or based on a widespread need, it might be most cost-effective to have that speaker travel the state giving multiple sessions one after another. Otherwise, classes could perhaps be offered in several sessions (e.g., spring, fall, summer) and the same topic offered in different parts of the state during different sessions.

### **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:**

It's too bad that we cannot just take as a given that "training is a good thing" and not have to go about determining the impact on users. But, unless the IMLS rules have changed in the last few months, this is not an option...

The outcome of successful training would be that participants learned something they were able to use on the job to help them provide better service to library patrons.

It is always challenging to gauge the success of training. In my experience, it is not enough to give participants an evaluation immediately after the class has ended and ask them if they think they know more than before the class started, or to ask them if they have an idea of how they will apply the training once they get back to work. It would be more effective to systematically send a follow-up survey to each participant (in the form of an email that points them to a web-based form) about 3-4 months after the class. Ask them a few specific questions about how they have applied the training in real-life situations in their library since they returned from the class. The evidence may be more anecdotal than output but it should still yield some tangible examples of the program making an impact.

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

(NOTE: Here is a personal opinion. I would be very, very careful with developing / offering training for the K-12 or special library markets. If the demand for training is more than can be met, then perhaps the emphasis should be on courses that are generally beneficial to public and academic library staff, and the courses could be open on a space-available basis to other types of libraries. But especially with the schools, I would be very worried about the demand for training being overwhelming and unmeetable if K-12 specialized needs were given the same priority as public & academic.)

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): \_\_\_\_\_

(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? Ongoing – this should become a practice and regular program of the State Library

(Note that most projects are from one year to four years in length.)