

Preliminary Proposal Narrative: Libraries as Launchpads, An Economic Revitalization Initiative

Project Justification. Goals and Objectives: New Mexico State Library co-created Libraries as Launchpads to empower New Mexicans to live in and strengthen their chosen community by contributing their talents to the creative economy, and is committed to taking successful practices beyond our state borders. This project aligns with LB21 Goal 3. Enhance training of library professionals to meet the needs of their communities, with the associated Objectives, 3.1. Develop training to equip the library and archival workforce to engage in sustained community development; and 3.2. Create and/or refine training programs that build library and archival workforce skills and expertise in contributing to the well-being of communities.

Summary: Name of Lead Applicant: New Mexico State Library (NMSL); **Amount of Funds Requested:** \$249,977; **Cost Share:** N/A; **Partner Organizations:** Managing partner- Creative Startups, Confirmed state/regional partners- 1) Cuyahoga County Public Library System, 2) New Jersey State Library-NJLibsGrowBiz, 3) Southeast Florida Library Information Network, 4) Idaho Commission for Libraries. **Overall Need:** Libraries are undervalued and overlooked as a resource to support community resiliency and economic development. Small businesses and entrepreneurs from historically underserved populations struggle to find the support they need via traditional venues, and COVID-19 has increased these challenges. **Intended Impacts:** 1) Solidify a diverse network of national Entrepreneurship Librarians and equip 20+ librarians in underserved communities with the skills they need to map community assets and offer ongoing support to local entrepreneurs; 2) 5+ Entrepreneurship librarians selected to transform into hubs for entrepreneurship, becoming examples for a national case study; 3) Case study Hubs inform a guide, *How (and Why!) to Transform Your Library into a Hub for Entrepreneurship*, available so libraries nationally can adopt the model and become Hubs of entrepreneurship, directing entrepreneurs to relevant resources available in their communities; 4) Recentering the focus of library space around community development and wellbeing.

This project builds on a 2018 IMLS National Leadership planning grant to the New Mexico State Library, which was to pilot the Libraries as Launchpads program with Creative Startups and five public and tribal libraries in New Mexico. Based on dissemination of our initial results, we received interest from libraries across the country including the partners listed above and libraries in Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Maryland, Montana, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wyoming. We now request an LB21 Implementation Grant to expand the model nationwide, develop and disseminate resources to support wide lasting benefits and easy adoption.

Needs: 1) *Libraries are in a prime position to support economic recovery but the library workforce needs training to equip them with the skill and expertise required:* The health of our job market depends on new small businesses starting out with a strong foundation. Studies show that the COVID-19 pandemic is a financial crisis for small businesses but less so for large corporations (US Chamber, 2021). Small businesses supplied approximately 50% of American jobs pre-pandemic (Forbes, 2019), recent data shows closures continue to increase and that 60% of COVID related small business closures are likely permanent (Yelp, 2021). Already recognized knowledge centers, libraries are a trusted entry point for a diverse group of potential entrepreneurs who may not feel comfortable in traditional economic development spaces. In fact, libraries are among the most trusted sources of information in the US according to a 2016 study by Pew Research. Advancing librarians' knowledge and understanding of entrepreneurship, growing their connections to the business ecosystem, and increasing their self-efficacy to support businesses prepares them to play a key role in community and economic development through the recovery and thereafter. 2) *The path to entrepreneurship needs to be accessible to ALL people:* Business resources abound, yet they are not accessible or are intimidating to those who do not know where to find them. Further, low-income and communities of color generally have fewer nearby resources at their disposal. As more and more support resources move online, low-income families are disproportionately affected by this increasing tech divide: 29% don't have smartphones, 46% don't have home computers and 64% don't have a tablet (American Library Association, 2020). 3) *Libraries need to advocate for themselves with community leaders and decision makers:* Even with their unique ability to fill the gaps in the local ecosystem through a myriad of services, libraries are often undervalued and overlooked as a resource for economic development. Positioning libraries as entrepreneurship hubs, equipping librarians to support small business, and setting them up with the tools to measure their impact has the potential to both reach the most underserved entrepreneurs and raise awareness of the economic potential libraries can unleash.

Project Work Plan. NMSL's strategic partner, Creative Startups (<https://www.creativestartups.org>), a 501(c)3 with over 15 years' experience growing creative entrepreneur ecosystems and training entrepreneurship educators, will lead training and management of the program across sites. A co-creator of Libraries as Launchpads, Creative Startups has worked closely with NMLS to develop the program through multiple iterations, and believes now more than ever that

libraries are a critical economic hub for any community. NMSL and library partners will identify and confirm participants from target groups in their regions.

Activity	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Milestones
Select librarians for training	Aug-Sept, 2022	Library partners (Includes NMSL)	Confirm 20-25 librarians from 5-7 states/regions (3-5 per state/region).
Host Entrepreneurship Librarian Training	Sept-Dec, 2022	Creative Startups Outside evaluator	Libraries join a national cohort for virtual 8-week Entrepreneurship Librarian training. Pre and post evaluation questionnaires complete.
Select Hub Libraries	Jan-Mar, 2023	Library partners Creative Startups	5-7 of trained libraries selected to become Hubs. Site visits and assessments of each Hub community.
Build Entrepreneurship Library Hubs	Mar-Dec, 2023	Creative Startups Library partners	Develop and implement individual plans with each Hub. Virtual local Entrepreneurship Educators training. Host acceleration programs for entrepreneurs.
Evaluate Hub libraries	Dec, 2023 - Feb, 2024	Creative Startups Outside evaluator	Evaluate pre and post surveys from Hub libraries to measure knowledge, network, and self-efficacy gains.
Reflection meetings	Jan-Mar, 2024	Creative Startups Library partners	Virtual debrief with Hub libraries. Share/examine significant findings from evaluation with partners
Create and Publish How to Guide	Feb-May, 2024	Creative Startups Outside evaluator NMSL	Complete Hub case studies and publish how to transform your library guide.
Dissemination	Jun-Jul, 2024	All partners	Publication shared with public libraries, community leaders, and influencers across the nation.

Diversity Plan. All program and educational materials are available in a variety of formats to support the inclusion of people with physical or learning disabilities. Creative Startups training programs are currently available in Spanish and are made available in different languages as needed. The Entrepreneurship Librarian training and case study Hubs will encompass a wide variety of library services areas, urban, rural, tribal, in various regions across the country. Partners will guide selection of libraries in their regions with priority for librarians from underrepresented groups to ensure a diverse group of librarians are selected from each region. Current NM librarians committed to participating are from El Pueblo de Abiquiu Library (pop. 231) 51% hispanic/latino, and Albuquerque South Valley branch (metropolitan population 923,630) library census tract 80.2% hispanic/latino, 25.9% of the population below the poverty line.

Project Results. By the end of the two-year grant period, the program will be operational in 5-7 states. Results will include: 1) 20-25 Entrepreneurship librarians advance knowledge and understanding of how to support entrepreneurs in their communities. Librarians become entrepreneurship resource experts. They have mapped assets and understand the resources available in their community and are connected to existing support organizations. They become an entry point for entrepreneurs, with a thorough understanding of the entrepreneurial journey, they can recognize entrepreneurial challenges and offer direction to relevant resources in their community to get entrepreneurs the individualized support they need. 2) 5-7 libraries become case studies and national examples for how to transform into an Entrepreneurship Hub. Hubs work as a cohort with Creative Startups to expand on the learnings from the training and put them to the test. Through strategic local and regional partnerships they make and implement plans to fill the gaps in their local entrepreneurial ecosystems and engage in sustained community development. 3) Case studies inform *How (and Why!) to Transform Your Library into a Hub for Entrepreneurship* guide which will be made available so libraries nationally can transform into hubs; 4) Using impact assessment skills learned in the training, librarians can measure and communicate impact to civic and community leaders. They begin to shift the narrative of what a library space is and how it can be used - recentering the focus of library space around community development and wellbeing.

Project Budget. The New Mexico State Library System requests **\$249,997** over two years. This includes: **\$9,360 for Personnel**; **\$184,806 for Contractual** (\$78,284 program manager ~25hrs/week, \$9,000 direction from Creative Startups CEO, \$13,750 evaluation, \$24,673 lead faculty, \$38,400 program support, \$1,800 guest lecturers, \$5,200 stipend per each of 7 hub libraries); **\$2,980 for Supplies** (\$1,230 workbooks, \$1,750 outreach materials); **\$12,624 for Travel** (~\$1,800 per Hub visit for site assessments); **\$22,727 Indirect** at 10%.