

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois Fire Service Institute
Libraries as Partners for Emergency Preparedness and Response in Times of Crisis

Libraries as Partners for Emergency Preparedness and Response in Times of Crisis, a two-year \$150,000 Planning Grant Project, aligns with NLG Goal 4, Objectives 4.1 and 4.2. The project joins the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) Illinois Fire Service Institute (IFSI), the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI), and the School of Information Sciences at UIUC (iSchool) to conduct a preliminary investigation to identify the types and extent of community partnerships and collaborations between libraries and other community organizations in times of crisis. Closely informing the investigation is a robust network of state and national advisors. The State Advisory Committee includes confirmed participation from Illinois libraries, library consortia and associations, and universities, as well as key state emergency management organizations¹. The National Advisory Board includes confirmed participation from library associations and universities². Libraries face the need of learning how to form relationships and work with community partners during crises. This project will discover and advocate for the essential role libraries play in community safety and well-being and create conversations and connections between libraries and community partners during a public crisis.

Project Justification. Libraries are often cited as information hubs during immediate emergencies for enhancing resiliency and post-disaster recovery efforts³. Libraries of all types have risen to the challenges presented during past emergencies, including during Covid-19. However, libraries cannot respond to public crises alone and must develop sustainable community partnerships to respond to crises. Little research has been undertaken to reveal the extent to which libraries work in collaboration with community partners during crises, how relationships are facilitated, or best practices for working with partners. To fill this research gap, *Libraries as Partners* will investigate the nature and scope of library-partner relationships to identify strategies that strengthen and deepen community networks and support resiliency during crises. Using Illinois' diverse libraries and communities as a case study and the national lens of the project's National Advisory Board, findings will be elevated beyond Illinois to a national level through the creation of a generalizable and reusable framework relevant and understandable by multi-type libraries to promote successful library-community partner collaborations during crises. This multi-type library focus will increase the potential for change and allow for deeper reflections on what works in library-partner collaborations during crises.

Project Work Plan. *Libraries as Partners* will occur over two years and will be divided between a web-based survey and two Community Engagement Roundtables (CERs). Both will build on the work of previous IMLS-funded disaster grants⁴ and utilize targeted universalism, which sets universal goals through targeted processes; and Team Cognitive Work Analysis (TeamCWA), which examines collaborations in a complex sociotechnical system. To discover gaps to library services during crises, strategies will be developed that focus on target populations to ensure diverse representation and participation. Through the survey, CERs, and work with advisors, we will gain significant understanding of the social capital and trust needed for successful collaborations during crisis. The project team will work with a State Advisory Committee and a National Advisory Board who will be involved at every step of the project. To facilitate communication, the project team will meet with state and national advisors at quarterly meetings, and as needed. Meetings will be recorded, and minutes shared with advisors. Group emails will be used to keep advisors up to date and engaged. In Year One, activities will focus on the design, dissemination, and analysis of a web-based survey of Illinois multi-type libraries, a microcosm of U.S. libraries, to identify common themes and establish a baseline. Anticipated survey response rates are 15% to 30%. In Year One, the project team will lead survey design, data analysis, and findings dissemination, with the state and national advisors assisting and overseeing the analytic plan and findings dissemination. State advisors will distribute surveys to the library communities they represent across Illinois to facilitate increased survey participation and returns. National advisors will be key in the survey design and analysis to ensure that results will be

¹ Illinois State Library, Illinois library systems, Chicago Public Library System, Illinois Library Association, Association of Illinois School Library Educators, Special Libraries Association Illinois Community, Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal, Illinois Emergency Management Agency, and Champaign-Urbana Public Health Department

² American Library Association, Association of Research Libraries, Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, Joint Council of Librarians of Color Incorporated, Special Libraries Association, National Library of Medicine, Public Library Association, Orbis Cascade Alliance, Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative, and University of Texas at Austin

³ Stricker, Michele, "Ports in a Storm: The Role of the Public Library in Times of Crisis," 2019

⁴ Florida State University, LG-246371-OLS-20 and University of Texas at Austin, RE-96-18-0127-18 (a), RE-96-18-0127-18

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applicable and relevant on a national level. In Year Two, based on survey findings, the project team will work with state and national advisors to design and implement two CERs to bring together panelists and participants from across the nation for in-depth discussion of survey themes, and expand the conversation to the national forum. 20-25 panelists from across the country will be invited to participate in each CERs. Starting with the baseline survey findings, a conversation including voices from many states will discuss commonalities across the nation and create a framework for future national level investigations and collaborations. The CERs will be held at the Illinois Fire Service Institute at UIUC and will include a virtual component for those unable to attend. Through the combination of the Illinois case study, national level CERs, and collaboration with advisors at every step of the project, findings will be highly applicable outside of Illinois.

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| Year 1 (Aug. 1, 2023 – Jul. 31, 2024) |
| <u>Aug.-Sept. 2023:</u> Coordinate and establish work plans with advisors using Interprofessional Shared Decision-Making; develop shared data stewardship plan with advisors; and set up of project website freely available to the public and web-based survey platform both hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. |
| <u>Sept.-Oct. 2023:</u> Co-develop survey and prototyping instrument; seek UIUC Institutional Review Board approval and consents across organizations addressing privacy and security; conduct at least two live information sessions at state and national events; work on target population with the State Advisory Committee; test sample survey. |
| <u>Nov. 2023-Feb. 2024:</u> Collect survey data using Qualtrics with three follow ups with the State Advisory Committee. |
| <u>Mar.-May 2024:</u> The project team will conduct quantitative analyses (e.g., descriptive statistics) and TeamCWA on survey data. Project team, state and national advisors will jointly conduct thematic analysis of the qualitative data (using Taguette for collaborative coding). |
| <u>Jun.-Jul. 2024:</u> Share raw and summarized data with advisors; share aggregated data and survey findings report at the project webpage and social media (e.g., IFSI Facebook that has reached over 1 million people). |
| Year 2 (Aug. 1, 2024 – Jul. 31, 2025) |
| <u>Aug.-Oct. 2024:</u> Co-develop CERs, registration form, and feedback form with both groups of advisors; recommend and select 20-25 panelists and at least 100 CERs participants by both groups of advisors for each Roundtable. |
| <u>Sept.-Nov. 2024:</u> Invite and confirm panelists and participants for CERs, develop CERs and online updates. |
| <u>Nov.-Dec. 2024:</u> Design and set up CERs; coordinate with advisors and panelists; update web pages. |
| <u>Jan.-Feb. 2025:</u> Convene two professionally facilitated CERs at IFSI, with technology support for virtual participants: Roundtable I in Jan.: Panelists and participants critique initial survey data to identify gaps; and Roundtable II in Feb.: Initial convergences on identified collaborative strategies. Panelists and participants will be invited, with specific recruitment by both groups of advisors and their networks that will include personnel in partner agencies serving and being comprised of under-represented populations (defined by those whose access to formal agency-level social capital networks and data engagement may be limited). |
| <u>Feb.-Apr. 2025:</u> CERs data analysis, reports, and dissemination guided and validated by both groups of advisors. |
| <u>May-Jul. 2025:</u> Project deliverables creation include a project white paper, articles, website, and conference presentations at major state and national library and non-library conferences and project dissemination plan. |

Diversity Plan. Libraries as Partners will include Illinois libraries, regardless of location, type, size, or community served. A wide variety of library personnel, from administrators to library workers, and community partners both in and outside of Illinois will be included in the oversight groups and invited to participate in survey and/or CERs. This project will strengthen the library field’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion practices by involving libraries that serve all communities, regardless of the demographics of their patron base.

Project Results. Libraries as Partners will discover the extent and kinds of library-community partnerships that exist during emergency planning and response to place the library on a level of importance equal to that of established emergency response organizations. This grant will lay the framework for future studies on library-partner relationships and key issues that should be further addressed. Deliverables from *Libraries as Partners* will include a project website featuring summarized data (de-identified and aggregate), design methods and instruments (survey and CERs), process documentation of data collection, analysis and dissemination, and outputs from Roundtables. Publications and presentations may include major state and national library and relevant non-library venues. Based on findings from this planning grant, a research grant will be prepared to further explore collaborations using focus groups and interviews.

Budget Summary. Salaries and Wages: \$37,343; Fringe Benefits: \$17,767; Travel: \$0; Supplies, Materials, and Equipment: \$0; Subawards and Contracts: \$33,155; Student Support: \$25,630; Total Direct Costs: \$113,895; Indirect Costs: \$36,105; Total Project Costs: \$150,000