

The Alexandria Archive Institute (Open Context)

The Alexandria Archive Institute (AAI) seeks an IMLS National Leadership Grants for Libraries – Applied Research Grant in the amount of \$700,000 (with no cost sharing) for the project *Advancing FAIR+CARE Practices in Cultural Heritage*. This project addresses program **Goal 5, Objective 5.1**. This project is led by the AAI, an award-willing¹ leader in publishing open and interoperable archaeological research data (via [Open Context](#)). To broaden and diversify community engagement with data, the AAI recently launched a [data literacy program](#) with a 2020 grant from the Mellon Foundation. In the proposed project, the AAI will work with a coalition of partners representing leaders in archaeological data curation– [tDAR](#), the [Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery](#), and the multi-state agency collaborations of the [Digital Index of North American Archaeology](#) project– to promote the widespread adoption of FAIR+CARE practices in archaeology and cultural heritage among diverse practitioners, including cultural resource management firms, state historic preservation offices, Tribal historic preservation officers, professional organizations, museums, publishers, governmental agencies, funders, libraries, and data repositories.

Expanding on our data curation, literacy and community engagement programs, this project will substantially advance the capacity of cultural heritage institutions to curate archaeological and other cultural heritage data in an ethically responsible manner through the principles of [FAIR](#) (findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reuse) and [CARE](#) (collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility, and ethics). The intended impacts are to make data more empowering to diverse stakeholder communities, particularly Indigenous and other groups often side-lined from public policy, research, and educational roles ([Gupta et al. 2022](#)). Implementing FAIR+CARE provides a framework for ensuring practitioners consider more intentionally their data creation, curation, and dissemination practices.

Project Justification: Archaeological practice spans many sectors, involving Tribal, state and national government agencies, commercial cultural resource management firms, and community organisations, as well as archives, museums, libraries and digital repositories. Archaeological data also have complex technical, professional, social, economic, cultural, legal and policy entanglements. Poor understanding and uncertainty about these entanglements elevate risks associated with data sharing and open science practices. Culturally inappropriate curation practices, as well as data appropriation and misuse can lead to damaging breaches of trust with stakeholder communities and bring harm to these communities.

The primary goal of this project is to reconcile the apparent social and technical contradictions between CARE (highly contextual, socially embedded) and FAIR (fungible, open) principles. By providing clear ethical good practice guidance and digital data governance models integrating FAIR+CARE practices, this project will improve the overall quantity and quality of reusable cultural heritage data while reducing risks of harm and encouraging meaningful participation and benefits-sharing with Indigenous nations and other descendant communities. To do this, we will establish a network of diverse experts to devise a series of tangible outcomes to expand FAIR+CARE practice across the cultural heritage sector, especially archaeology. The network will explore three research questions:

- Q1.** How can we embed FAIR+CARE practices in institutional settings, including libraries, museums, digital repositories, publishers, and state, and Tribal public agencies that manage cultural heritage?
- Q2.** How can data management practices better represent Indigenous concepts and worldviews (expressed in Indigenous languages, ontologies, and controlled vocabularies) so they meet Indigenous needs educational, cultural, and other goals?
- Q3.** What guides, protocols, training, capacity building, and metadata² are needed to make the benefits of FAIR data more equitably distributed while reducing risks of harmful appropriation?

Project Work Plan: Our 45 (committed) participants will meet twice in person to explore the application and implications of the FAIR+CARE principles in different institutional settings. These participants will also divide into three smaller thematic working groups (WGs) with the aims and outcomes below. WGs will

¹ The National Science Foundation and National Endowment for the Humanities link to Open Context for grant data management. Our team has awards from the International Data Curation Conference ([2014](#)), the Archaeological Institute of America ([2016](#)), and a [2013 “Champion of Change”](#) award from President Obama.

² E.g.: [Local Contexts](#) publishes a metadata standard to help communicate Indigenous community needs and expectations.

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gather on Zoom monthly and report their progress to other WGs at the in-person workshops. The in-person workshops will facilitate cross-pollination and expansion or refinement of the WGs. WGs will continually engage with a wider network of repositories, libraries, museums, Tribal, and heritage organizations. The WGs are numbered according to their focus on each of the questions above:

- **WG1** will develop and build out a **FAIR+CARE Archaeological Data Commitment** and encourage individuals and organizations to sign on, thus establishing a **FAIR+CARE Archaeological Data Coalition**. This coalition will develop and promote inclusive **digital data governance models** that other organizations and agencies can adopt and adapt. This group will recommend establishing an interest group in a professional society to review the Commitment and support the Coalition into the future. This WG will demonstrate how such governance frameworks can promote community engagement with data curation practices in different institutional settings.
- **WG2** will pilot and disseminate **collaborative practices to support Indigenous community values and interests** in appropriately representing Indigenous languages and concepts in ontologies, controlled vocabularies, and metadata in cultural heritage data, as well as public engagement and teaching materials presenting such data.
- **WG3** will design guidelines and training materials packaged into a **FAIR+CARE Archaeological Data Assessment Tool** (a simple GitHub hosted client side Web questionnaire built with Bootstrap and Vue.js) that will suggest ethical data practices customized to user responses. This will support practitioners in self-assessment of their alignment with FAIR+CARE practices and suggest possible strategies to achieve better alignment.

Diversity Plan: The composition of our leadership team has informed proposal planning. Three of the four PIs are women, two of the four are racialized, and one is an expert in the application of CARE principles in archaeology in support of Indigenous knowledge and data sovereignty. Participants represent educators/data creators from universities (7), data repositories (9), libraries/research support (2), publishers (1), museums (3), professional archaeology societies (5), State Historic Preservation Offices (2), Tribal perspectives (7), the cultural resource management industry (4), and federal agencies (5). Twenty participants are women and ten are from the BIPOC community. Both postdoctoral scholars are women, and one is racialized. Participant organizations represented include the American Anthropological Association, Society for American Archaeology, Society of Historical Archaeology, Register of Professional Archaeology, National Park Service, US Bureau of Land Management, US Army Corps of Engineers, National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, and State Historic Preservation Offices. Participants represent both early career and established researchers, providing diverse perspectives for the full network and to populate each of the four working groups. Our meetings will be both in-person and virtual to accommodate the work and travel needs of our diverse participants. **This is the first time that representatives of such diverse archaeological stakeholders (academic, CRM, public, Tribal) have come together to shape data curation practices and policies.**

Project Results: By integrating CARE+FAIR, this project will demonstrate that excellence in data curation is not, and cannot be, a program to alienate digital data from stakeholders solely for the benefit of narrow technocratic interests. [Open Science](#) and [Open Government](#) practices that promote excellence and transparency can be usefully adapted to promote continued inclusion of stakeholder perspectives and interests in cultural heritage research and conservation. By demonstrating how FAIR+CARE practices work synergistically, this project will highlight how data curation and reuse is not only relevant, but is central, to the ethical conduct of cultural heritage conservation, teaching, and research in the 21st century. Our model for sustained multi-stakeholder collaborations will catalyse future partnerships.

Budget Summary: This three-year project has an anticipated budget of \$700,000. Most of the budget is for travel and stipends for the network members to participate in the project over three years. Travel and workshop expenses for 45 participants at two in-person workshops: \$160,000. Stipends for network members: \$60,000. Salaries and benefits for project PIs: \$120,000. Salaries and benefits for postdoctoral researchers: \$75,000. Undergraduate research assistants: \$25,000. Participant support (honoraria): \$70,000. Consultants: \$120,000. Materials: \$10,000. Overhead (10% *de minimis*): \$60,000.