

## Summary

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) requests \$150,000 for a 24-month NLG-L planning grant to investigate and articulate the needs of territorial and non-contiguous state archives and develop a plan for their support. Using a series of data-gathering assessment methods, CoSA representatives will identify unique and shared agency needs and collaborative opportunities to address both individual and overarching challenges facing these institutions. This project supports CoSA's [strategic education and training and diversity and inclusion goals](#) (as per its 2022-26 strategic plan) and IMLS' Program Goal 2, Objective 2.3. The planned activities will strengthen the relationships between institutions, establish a network of support, create opportunities for mentoring and sharing within the CoSA membership, and identify next steps to address the identified challenges. Though focused on territorial and state government archives, the outputs will also have potential application to other under-resourced organizations nationwide as well as peer membership organizations such as [COSLA](#).

## Project Justification

CoSA regularly surveys its member institutions through annual, Board-conducted Calls to the States, [biennial State of State Records surveys](#), and [occasional Digital Preservation Capability Maturity Model self-assessment campaigns](#). A range of needs were recently expressed by the territorial archivists, spanning lack of funding, failing physical infrastructure, attracting and retaining diverse talent, increased costs, supply chain issues, and impending and actual environmental disaster due to climate crisis. Similar challenges also face the non-contiguous states of Hawaii and Alaska, who will serve as beneficiaries of this project as well as mentors for their territorial peers. While the needs have been expressed, individualized and collaborative solutions remain to be identified and shared.

As a nonprofit membership organization of the state and territorial government archives in the 50 states, five territories, and District of Columbia, CoSA provides leadership that strengthens and supports our members in their critical work to preserve and provide access to government records. Through [recent IMLS funding](#), CoSA facilitated a series of [Cultural Competency workshops](#) and working groups, led by consultant Helen Wong Smith, the lessons of which will inform the proposed exploratory work. CoSA has the capacity and support to manage this funding in order to develop responsive and replicable solutions.

## Project Work Plan

Given the geographical challenges and cultural concerns of working in authentic partnership with the territories and non-contiguous states, CoSA proposes a 24-month timeline. This should allow for the growth of relationships, pace of work, time zone complications, impact of inclement weather, and travel time anticipated to conduct the discovery phase of the project while also accounting for final assessment, future planning, and reporting.

### Quarter 1

Relying on established relationships in the geographic regions, CoSA will identify and hire at least two program consultants with relationships and experience with archives in the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands) and the Pacific Rim (Alaska, Hawaii, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam). CoSA will host at least one virtual introductory meeting to launch the project and establish relationships between the CoSA members and the consultants. The consultants will work to schedule at least one site visit to each of the 7 archives. In coordination with CoSA staff, the consultants will develop questions to explore and determine the best method(s) for data collection (e.g., surveys, focus groups, or one-on-one interviews). These will build upon the most recent surveys conducted by CoSA to reduce duplication of work and seek more comprehensive articulation of the challenges already identified.

### Quarter 2-3

Research questions will be finalized, and data gathering will begin. Expected topics for investigations include, but are not limited to, emergency preparedness and disaster planning; impact of climate change on archival records and facilities; infrastructure and technology needs; building stability and growth potential; collection policies

and challenges; community needs unique to the region; staffing levels and pool for future hiring; training and skills gaps; and growing community in state/territorial government (e.g., relationships with CIOs) to identify opportunities to work collaboratively across and within their governments.

Using CoSA platforms, the consultants will conduct virtual data collection as determined useful. Focus groups and other conversations will build a community of practice among individuals in the various institutions. Site visits will be finalized and booked. In-person visits will last between 2 to 7 days, depending on flight schedules and ability to schedule meetings. Consultants will work with CoSA members to schedule additional meetings with related officials to raise the profile of the project and the archives, further emphasizing the mission of the institutions. In alignment with CoSA's annual meeting (*tentatively Summer 2024*), representatives from the participating institutions will gather in-person for a symposium and listening session, further cultivating the cohort of participants. CoSA's annual meeting is co-located with a mission-aligned organization, and funds will also cover participation in that organization's conference.

#### Quarter 4

The consultants will finish reviewing the qualitative and quantitative data gathered and transforming assessments into practical strategies and actions. The data analysis will be shared through internal recommendations to the participants and a published public report. Of particular value will be the development of possible work plans, guidelines, needs assessment worksheets, and other immediately applicable recommendations. The outputs will be shared widely through CoSA communication outlets (blog, website, social media), mission-aligned organizations (e.g., SAA, COSLA, NAGARA), and at least one conference presentation.

#### **Diversity Plan (if applicable)**

CoSA seeks to be a relevant, inclusive, and collaborative organization through responsive action on behalf of its members. Regular conversations with the territories and non-contiguous states informed the need for this planning grant. The territories and non-contiguous states represent the voices of many Indigenous and BIPOC individuals and communities in the US, and their archives have been historically underfunded, resulting in underrepresentation in our historical record. Assuring the sustainable support of these governmental archives is critical to preserve, sustain, and share the stories of these areas and empower these communities with the resources to hold governments accountable.

#### **Project Results**

This project will produce a clearly articulated plan to support the long-term stability and sustainability of the involved archives. CoSA will widely disseminate a published report and supporting documents with recommendations and practical tools for implementation of the plan. By taking this exploratory step, CoSA intends to pursue additional funding to begin meeting needs in the ways identified by institutions. The project will also develop relationships between individuals and institutions to foster inter-organizational collaboration and support with the hope of creating a solid foundation for agency development. By directing thoughtful attention to the territorial and non-contiguous state government archives, they can then become models for other regional collecting organizations as well as remote communities throughout the US.

#### **Budget Summary**

CoSA is requesting \$150,000 to accomplish our project goals. The budget will include staffing funding for 2 archival consultants and a portion of the salary and benefits for the CoSA Deputy Director (\$60,000). Honoraria will be provided, as allowable, to the lead archivists at participating institutions (\$7000). The bulk of the budget will cover travel costs related to site visits, an in-person symposium, co-located professional development, and conference attendance (\$77,000) with remaining funds dedicated to graphic design, publication, and dissemination of the results (\$6000).