

Oneida Nation 2024 IMLS Library Enhancement Grant Application

Organizational Profile:

The Oneida Nation is overseen by the Oneida General Tribal Council (all enrolled tribal members eighteen years and older) who every three years elects a nine-member Business Committee to govern the broad activities of the Nation and gather information on the day-to-day activities of the Nation from Area Managers, Directors, and other management. The enrolled Oneida membership in Brown and Outagamie Counties is 7,737, 4,570 of who live on the reservation. Minors are 23% of the population and elders are 21%. The Oneida tribal members living in this area have a long history of high unemployment and high subsequent poverty. The percent of children that attend the Oneida Nation School System eligible for the free/reduced lunch program is over 90% of the school population. This percentage is much more indicative of our real service population's economy.

The vision of the Oneida Nation is a Nation of strong families built on Tsi'niyukwalihot^ ("Our Ways") and a strong economy. The Oneida Nation's mission is to strengthen and protect our people, reclaim our land, and enhance the environment by exercising our sovereignty. Our Core Values of the Good Mind teachings are the spiritual and social foundation of who we have always been as Oneida people: Kahliwi'yo'- The use of good words about ourselves, our nation, and our future; Kanolukhwa'sla - compassion, caring, identity, and joy of being; Twahwahtsi'lay^ - all of us are family; Yukwatsistay - our fire and our spirit within each of us; Kahletsyal'usla - the heart felt encouragement of the best in each of us; Ka'tshastst^sla - the strength of belief and vision as a People; and Ka'nikuhli'yo' - the openness of the good spirit and mind.

The Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin funds two libraries, both are part of the Nicolet Federated Library System, sharing their circulation and collection database system with the Outagamie-Waupaca Library System, OWLSnet. Both libraries are located on the Oneida Reservation. The Oneida Community Library is central to the reservation and includes the Village of Hobart and Brown County. The Green Earth Branch Library is located on the west side of the reservation, and includes the entire unincorporated township, of Oneida, and Outagamie County. The libraries are not funded by the Village of Hobart or Town of Oneida. Both Outagamie County and the Town of Oneida have a documented understanding that we provide library services to all community members. Our state and system- recognized service population are the Oneida tribal members of Brown and Outagamie County reservation and is just over 4,570. Because we are located in the Village of Hobart and Town of Oneida and neither of those municipalities have their own library, and because tribal members that are off reservation but in the vicinity (Brown and Outagamie Counties) use the library, our service population is considered by the OWLSnet system, our consortia, to be just over 7,700 people. Our general clientele is the Oneida tribal members in both counties on the reservation. Those two populations are considered our "home agency" population by our circulation system. The Oneida Nation Library was begun in 1969 operating out of a community building and moved to its current location on the East side of the reservation in 1977, the Oneida Youth department was added in 1988 and a second branch library the Green Earth Branch Library was opened in 2006.

The Libraries' Mission Statement: To provide for the informational needs of the Oneida community while building a collection that reflects our unique Oneida heritage. All persons will have access to current, balanced materials, services, & programs that will enrich their informational, cultural, & recreational needs. Mission Statement of our Youth Department: To provide the youth of our Nation & community, 0-22, cultural, social, recreational, & informational fulfillment through our collections, services, programs, & technology, while they discover the joy of reading & the value of libraries & literacy.

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Our Mission Statement

To provide for the informational needs of the Oneida Community, while building a collection that reflects our unique Oneida heritage.

All persons will have access to current, balanced materials, services, and programs, that will enrich their informational, cultural, and recreational needs.

Project Justification:

Our Project will focus on IMLS goal of lifelong learning and advanced shared knowledge and learning opportunities for all. We will also focus on enhanced preservation and revitalization of Native American cultures and languages. These are the goals which best support our need as Oneida people.

Need; The Oneida Tribe as an American Indian people have historically been a socially disadvantaged community. The current economic statistics include a community unemployment rate exceeding 20.80%, 1,717 with no earnings at all in 2022, and a poverty rate of more than 30%. With both statistics being significantly higher than the prevailing rates in surrounding communities. According to the most recent Oneida Tribal census there are 7,737 Oneida Tribal members living within the confines of the Oneida reservation or directly adjacent to it. Of those 4,570 live directly within the reservation proper and are served almost exclusively by the two Oneida community libraries the Main and Green Earth libraries. According to the most recent us governmental census figures (2020) there are 995 Oneida families living on the Oneida Indian reservation, of those 483 (48.54%) reported incomes below the then most recent (2020) poverty level. Since that time the number of Oneida families living at income levels below the poverty level, as is determined by those seeking and qualifying for economic assistance is 834 (83.81%) in agreement with this statistic is the number of Oneida families currently receiving food assistance from the Oneida Nation – 837 (84.12%) this includes 3,013 children. The level of American Indians living in Brown and Outagamie Counties receiving Food Share was 26% compared to 10% of all residents. Currently, 75% of our target households are at or below 150% of the federal poverty line. According to the 2020 census the median family income for residents of Brown county Wisconsin is \$64,728 and for Outagamie County Wisconsin \$68,441 the two counties that encompass the Oneida Indian reservation. With an average family size of 4, for all Oneida families the median family income in those same county areas is below \$39,000 ranging from 43.5% to 58.6% lower (US Census bureau 2020 – B19202C).

While all the problems faced by Oneida Community members, which includes the economic deprivation referred to above, as well as gang violence and chemical abuse, cannot be laid at the doorstep of current or historical learning problems or the need for updating skills and computer access. These issues do contribute to it. Currently there exists a significant gap in reading skills found at the third-grade level and above. While 43% of Non-Native American children tested at the 3rd grade level in this area were shown to be proficient in reading at grade level in 2021, only 5% of American Indian youth in that age group were found to be equally proficient. The reading proficiency for the whole community, though untested, is also low. One result of this is the general lack of interest that children in this area have in reading. This is a problem we hope to continue addressing with this project.

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Another problem faced by the library includes an aging and degrading facility and a need for staff training. Most of our staff have basic library skills but are not trained adequately in library operations or in providing remedial skills for our community. We need to help our community by upgrading our library buildings including, new shelving, more books, storage units, a new circulation desk, and new computers for staff and patrons to improve our efficiency as a library organization. We also need more programming materials to support our community programming and community outreach. We also need funds to provide training for our staff so that they can better serve the community. As it regards the condition of the library itself, several of our bookcases have had to be discarded because of excessive wear and tear and our circulations desk is actually being held together with tape. The employee work stations are also older and falling into disrepair. The computers in the library are nearly 10 years old and are no longer supported by the manufacturer. So, we have made the replacement of this older equipment a goal for this application.

Target Audience:

In the case of this project our target group includes the entire community with a particular focus on youths ages K-12. We provide significant programming for our community at all ages, last year we had 8,699 visitors. We also participate in a interlibrary loan program where we have had 8,568 items loaned and another 1,640 items borrowed. Our computer usage included 1,878 distinct computer sessions.

We provide many programs designed to encourage library usage and visitation, for our elders, our largest user group, we provide what we call our elder hour activities for example there is, rec time for elders to get together and share experiences and personal history, this program is active but could benefit from more community outreach. We have a beading circle where elders have a chance to maintain their skills and again share with each other and provide examples and processes with younger patrons. We have a time together where we share movie classics and have group discussions about the movies and their content and messages if any. This is one of the areas where we would like to add more movies for discussion. We have an elder's language club; it serves as a place where elders can sharpen their language skills and it is also a place where our instructors and other interest parties can come and hear and see the Oneida language in action. This program most of all could benefit from more outreach as our native speakers continue to dwindle in number. Finally, there is our elder's culture and painting groups. This is a place where elders can learn to express themselves in an artistic manner, and share stories related to the art works that they create, this program helps elders maintain and share a connection with the world around them and strengthens their cognitive skills. The elders group also works to develop computer skills along with the rest of our patrons. All of these activities can use significant outreach to encourage participation.

Currently we offer several youth time activities to encourage their participation including; Storytime where individuals including library staff read books to small groups of children to try to entertain them and to stimulate their interest in books, we have a tiny stem (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) program where we encourage children to become interested in

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stem learning, we have a homeschool culture club and a home school stem club and a hang out time, we sponsor a teen take over day periodically where we allow the teens to take over the museum and use it, not detrimentally, in a manner that makes it more amenable to their needs. We have developed these programs because our youths and young adult patrons tend to under utilize the library and we feel that by providing more activities and computer time which is not available at home for many of our youths who live in under or unserved internet areas of the reservation will encourage library visitation and allow our staff to encourage use of the library and library offerings. Over the past few years we have offered cultural activities design to teach the youth traditional skills such as traditional dress making and rattle and drum making. We have also maintained summer reading and activity programming. To better serve our constituents more successfully we will require 8 computers for our Green Earth Library which is currently using only a few older computer models to serve the needs of our patrons, the computers will be used in distance learning activities and job search by our adult patrons. As well as by our elders for research, communications, and printing and by our youth for schoolwork, research, and recreation. We also need two staff computers and two laptops that can be used for program planning and for staff educational purposes. Currently our libraries (2) have 30,440 books and 6,022 videos and we would also like to purchase new books at all grade levels and more videos for use in our elder programing.

As was previously stated our staff could benefit from some training, some of them have not yet completed necessary course work that is required to improve their skills. We would encourage our staff to attend classes at the local technical college to meet those needs and further to participate in continuing education classes offered by the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

Beneficiaries:

As we stated our target group is the entire community and we believe that the entire community will benefit from this project in varying ways if this project is successful. Our libraries are located in Oneida housing projects in areas with limited internet access among populations where computers are still a luxury and so the computer access offered by the libraries is key to their success. Specifically, Oneida elders will benefit from a continued active presence in the community. The whole community will benefit through the activities of the elders designed to preserve and share our language and culture with newer generations. The school age youth will gain from increased reading and computer recreation opportunities. Our adult population will benefit from increased opportunities for distance learning and skills training. The adults will also benefit from improved job search and training opportunities. Our libraries in these areas are an oasis of non-violence and a center for community activity. They are just under utilized in some instances by the youths. It is our hope that by providing cultural activities, access to computers and reading forward programs that we can increase the reading of our younger members and strengthen them academically to face the world.

Project Work Plan:

We will begin the rejuvenation of our libraries by installing new and easier to use shelving systems, we will also install new staff workstations and a new circulation desk, and we will install new and faster computers designed to take make them more valuable to our patrons and

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staff. We will provide necessary training opportunities to our staff to increase their ability to serve our clientele. We will conduct community outreach to expand the draw of the library and encourage community members, especially youths, to come to the library to learn and be entertained.

Risks:

The primary risk is that our new plans and projects will not reach the intended audiences. We will mitigate this risk by using outreach and community activities designed to increase demand for the library. We will purchase new books and advertise the improvement in the quality of books that we will have to loan. We will advertise the arrival and installation of new computers and we will create new activities that will use the computers to appeal to the youths in the communities where they are located.

Planning:

The source of the planning will be the library manager and the staff. It is our hope that the staff will participate in training and learn new techniques that we can use to better serve our clients. The Oneida Nation will provide planning assistance for the installation for new shelves from its department of public works and computer planning from its IT department.

Implementation:

All implementations will be the responsibility of the Library Manager. She will be responsible for planning installations and additions as well as responsible for managing and tracking the schedule of each part of the plan and all programmatic processes.

Existing Resources:

In addition to the materials and supplies located in our libraries, the cultural heritage department and the museum will offer programing and assistance with activities at the libraries designed to support their cultural activities and trainings. All staff wages and the basic overhead (heat, electricity, and building maintenance) will be the responsibility of the Oneida Nation. The Nation has an IT department that will be responsible for all computer installation and maintenance. Our library also has a collection of 8,800+ books and 2,000+ videos, in addition to our current computers and software. We also have the required workstations for the new computers and have some shelving space.

Outreach:

The Oneida Libraries belong to several library organizations with whom they will share their list of activities, their successes, roadblocks, and failures. They will also report to the Oneida community through the use of the local community newspaper, and they will report to the Oneida Business Committee on their success annually. The library staff will visit local building and put up posters they will also use the libraries website to announce and publicize changes and improvements at the library.

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Project Results:

It is our intent to overcome some of the problems related to poor equipment, such as a circulation desk literally being held together by tape, by replacing it with new more efficient equipment. We will increase library usage through the presence of new and more enticing computer equipment, and finally we will improve the ability of our staff to provide service to our community by increasing their skills and improving their morale.

The community as it become more involved with online learning and with community learning from the interactions of youth and elders, will begin to demonstrate an increased interest in learning and will begin to share the contents of individual learning collectively. We believe that the current interest in the Oneida language will grow as people begin to encounter it in action at library events and the interest in Oneida history will grow as more of it becomes available to the community online. A significant portion of our community, because of various historical government programs, do not live near the reservation and being able to connect with our community over the internet in real time will help stimulate their Oneida learning and support their community connection as well. The increase in the number of books should stimulate reading by the community as will the increase in the number of periodicals. The increased number of movies will support existing program and promote the creation of new programming. The increased availability of our reach will generally support the growth of patronage and the use of the internet as an advertising device will increase the numbers of youths who use the library.

Due to the handover from COVID most of our staff are new and require assistance learning how to be library ambassadors. The training that they will receive as part of this project will give them a sound foundation on which to build their library related skills. They will take some basic course on library science that will help prepare them to perform at a higher level in their chosen field. Those who already have the basic requirements for the job will take refresher courses or CEUs to expand and maintain their skills. These individual will receive assistance with those learning opportunities and then be encouraged to share that knowledge with the rest of the team. The completion of the educational experiences will make them better librarians and benefit our patrons.

Sustainability:

While we cannot promise that the shelves will not age, but we will take care of them as best we can, the increased knowledge of our staff will only improve with age and usage. The lessons learned from our elders will continue to be felt by the community long after they are ended, and they will have a lasting impact on the preservation of our culture and community. We will record where possible, the stories and language shared with us by the elders, and we will make them available to the community. The increased use of our library by youth and their families will we believe lead to a growing generation of readers and promote the use of the library into the future.

