RE-256725-OLS-24
American Library Association (Public Programs Office)
Skills for 21st-Century Librarians: *Library Programming Fundamentals*

ALA requests $243,459 in Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian funding for an 18-month implementation grant, *Skills for 21st-Century Librarians: Library Programming Fundamentals.* This funding will enable ALA, working with instructional design partner Convergence Design Lab, research nonprofit Knology, and a team of expert programming librarians, to design, create and share *Library Programming Fundamentals*, a free online learning program that will use multimedia stories to teach library workers a wide range of programming skills. Through a combination of online course modules, short video clips and other learning formats that draw on real-world library case studies, we expect to reach an estimated 5,000 learners in the first year after its release. This work builds upon the IMLS-funded National Impact of Library Public Programs Assessment (Phase 1, 2017-19, Phase 2, 2021-23) and Skills for 21st-Century Librarians planning grant (2020-21). This proposal supports LB21 Goal 3, Obj. 3.3, and will take place from Aug. 1, 2024, to Jan. 31, 2026.

Project Justification
Now more than ever, library workers need access to free professional development tools to develop job skills and build confidence to foster relationships and connections with their communities. From book clubs to community dialogues, library programming helps libraries identify, address, and reflect community needs; enhance institutional capacity and services; and contribute to our democratic society. The skills required to conceive, develop and execute library programs that meet local needs are quite complex. In NILPPA Phase 1, ALA identified nine core competencies of library programming: Organizational Skills, Knowledge of the Community, Interpersonal Skills, Event Planning, Creativity, Content Knowledge, Outreach and Marketing, Financial Skills, and Evaluation. NILPPA Phase 1 also taught us that most library workers are not being adequately trained for programming work; master's-level LIS programs rarely prepare the next generation of library workers for the vital work of creating and leading programs, and many library workers receive no formal training in librarianship at all, especially in rural and under-resourced communities. In a NILPPA survey of programming library staff, 93 percent of respondents said they learned to run programs on the job, 62 percent from colleagues, and 74 percent from informal learning, citing examples like retail jobs and planning parties.

The groundwork for *Library Programming Fundamentals* is well laid. In ALA's Skills for 21st-Century Librarians planning grant, ALA convened a task force of library practitioners and instructors to propose learning objectives for each NILPPA competency and recommend next steps for the development of a programming course rooted in the competencies. Most recently, ALA has built upon these findings with NILPPA Phase 2, which studies indicators of programming's impact in communities, as well as libraries' crucial collaborations with partner organizations. Development and distribution of an online learning program based on these extensive findings is the culminating step of this work.

Project Work Plan
Key players in the development of *Library Programming Fundamentals* will include: ALA's Public Programs Office, whose mission is to empower libraries to create vibrant hubs of learning, conversation and connection in communities of all types; Convergence Design Lab, a 100% woman-owned, full-service research and design agency that specializes in building resilient learning ecosystems; Knology, a social science research nonprofit that led data collection and analysis for NILPPA Phases 1 and 2; and a core team of librarian advisors, including Dr. Audrey Barbakoff, EdD, MLIS, founder and CEO of Co/Lab Capacity (Community Led Capacity-Building), and Jose Miguel Ruiz, LIS instructor and librarian supervisor at Arlington (Va.) Public Library.

The development of *Library Programming Fundamentals* will fall into four phases. In **Phase 1 (Success Framing, 3 months),** ALA and Convergence will begin by conducting a landscape review, including a survey of users from ALA's Programming Librarian Facebook group (a private group of 30,000 individuals, mostly nonmembers of ALA), that aims to identify strengths and needs around programming. With those findings, we will design and host a series of virtual

collaborative design workshops with advisors, subject matter experts and target audiences to understand context and user needs and establish a cohesive vision. This process will help determine which learning modalities are best suited to our learners, what principles of adult learning best align with desired competencies, and what components (e.g., online learning modules, shareable stories and multimedia content, social learning experiences) should be included in the overall learning architecture and creative design. Design workshops — synchronous, collaborative sessions held with up to 10 participants across groups — will guide participants through in-depth questions and activities meant to inform insights and directions for learning design. To recruit workshop participants, we will approach library workers from a variety of library types who have experience facilitating successful programs through past ALA initiatives. In **Phase 2 (Design Learning Map, 3 months),** we will outline plans for the overall learning architecture, components, assessment strategies and delivery systems. The design will aim to create a sustainable system that does not become stale or outmoded over time, but rather centers around a growing repository of stories and other multimedia content. Librarian advisors will play a critical role in Phase 2, with regular oversight and feedback into the development process. Also during Phase 2, Knology will conduct a virtual focus group with six library representatives working in a range of contexts, during which they will be asked to respond to a draft outline of course components. In **Phase 3 (Learning Design and Multimedia Production, 9 months),** we will use the learning map created in Phase 2 to produce learning elements addressing each of the nine NILPPA competencies. Learning materials may include videos, audio stories, interactive guides and/or eLearning content that feature library workers from across the country. Through multimedia stories, we will invite programming librarians — from a variety of communities and library types — to serve as stipended "content experts" and share their real-world approaches, demonstrating how their work aligns to the NILPPA competency framework. We will aim to create learning resources of different lengths (e.g., one-hour modules for in-depth learning, 3-minute mini-clips for quick overviews). Finally, **Phase 4 (Dissemination and Evaluation, 3 months)** will involve disseminating *Library Programming Fundamentals* to the library field through a comprehensive marketing plan. These efforts will reach both ALA members and nonmembers through numerous communications channels, including email outreach to lists of library workers obtained through distribution services (i.e., ALA nonmembers), as well as promotion through social media, state libraries, state library associations, advertising, promotion at national conferences, and other means. Also during Phase 4, Knology will conduct a summative evaluation including three focus groups with six library workers each who have completed the learning program.

Diversity Plan: At a time where library workers are facing discrimination based on their identities, ALA commits to including and centering the perspectives and experiences of a diverse group of people when creating new professional development tools for the field.[1] In the context of this project, EDI means addressing issues around race, ethnicity, gender and sexual identification; geographic isolation/distribution; demographics of communities served; type of library; and MLIS and non-MLIS library workers. We commit to incorporating EDI concerns into each of the nine competency areas and to prioritizing the recruitment of BIPOC content experts, with a goal of at least 50% BIPOC representation.

Project Results: This project aims to increase the programming competencies of library workers through applied practice of theoretical concepts designed for local context. It will cultivate a learning community for programming librarians through the development of freely available learning resources of various lengths and formats, which will be hosted indefinitely on the ALA eLearning platform and ProgrammingLibrarian.org and shared on social media.

Budget Summary: The $243,459 budget includes $40,674 salaries and wages; $13,422 for fringe benefits; $145,000 for contracts ($80,000 for Convergence, $25,000 for Knology, and $40,000 for advisors and content experts); $750 in supplies, materials and equipment; $5,800 other costs (marketing and web operating); and $37,812 in indirect costs at ALA's federally negotiated rate of 25.10%.

---

[1] American Library Association, "ALA upholds its support for LGBTQIA+ library workers and reaffirms its commitment to equity and inclusivity," August 8, 2023,
https://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2023/08/ala-upholds-its-support-lgbtqia-library-workers-and-reaffirms-its-commitment