

# Framing the Future for Small and Rural Libraries

## Background information

- 6 states in the West collaborated to submit a grant to the Institute of Museum and Library Services. They received a Laura Bush-Community Catalyst grant that runs from July 1, 2020 through August 31, 2022. The six states are Arizona, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming.
- The primary purpose of the grant is to help small and rural libraries in the six state region develop community based strategic plans that address the needs of their community. The hope is the strategic plans will also include at least one goal identifying ways to improve services to an underserved portion of the community.

## What are the phases of the grant?

1. Phase 1 includes training about inclusion, raising awareness about the diversity present in every community (i.e., age, religion, race, ethnicity, income, etc.) and learning how to create a welcoming environment for everyone.
2. Phase 2 of the grant includes training about the importance of strategic planning and is focused on reducing the barriers to planning.
3. Phase 3 includes two intensive institutes designed to train facilitators in how to facilitate a community based plan. These facilitators will be paired with libraries that are interested in strategic planning. The idea is to create a no-cost/low-cost way for small and rural libraries to develop a plan.
4. Phase 4 includes the actual facilitation and development of community based strategic plans.

## Why is the Community Engagement and Inclusion piece so important?

- It creates a foundation that encourages librarians and potentially board members to scan their community and identify who is not being fully served.
- It raises awareness about different members of the community, their perspectives, and their needs and desires for library services.
- It encourages considering all community members and even the historical nature of the community when developing and designing library services.
- It gives attendees the skills and information to seek out feedback from underserved and changing community groups.

## What about the other phases?

- The remaining phases of the grant are designed to overcome perceived barriers to strategic planning. A good plan can help libraries efficiently and effectively use their resources to better serve their community.
- Rural and small libraries will be equipped to successfully engage all members of their communities through planning and they will be better prepared to face the changing future of libraries and reaffirm their status as vital centers of their communities.