Pre-Application Webinar for Libraries Transforming Communities: Focus on Small and Rural Libraries – Q&A

Questions answered in Q&A:

Q: I am about to update our ALA membership because I am the new director. Will I be eligible?
A: Yes, as long as your membership to either ALA or ARSL is active at time of application submission, you will meet the membership requirement.

Q: I received an LTC stipend for small and rural libraries to attend the ALA Preconference in New Orleans in 2018 about Conversation Cafe facilitation. Am I eligible for this grant?
A: Yes, you are eligible to also apply for this grant opportunity. You may choose to use what you learned about the conversation cafe model as part of your project.

Q: So we take the course, then host a conversation, then report and THEN we get the grant?
A: You will apply and be notified if you are selected for/receive the grant prior to hosting your conversation and reporting. You do not need to take the course until after you have been selected, although you may choose to take it now and use it to help inform your proposal.

Q: Is the training course free and how can we access it regardless of whether our proposal is accepted?
A: The e-course is completely free and open to anyone, as is the facilitation guide. You can find both at http://www.ala.org/tools/librariestransform/libraries-transforming-communities/small-mid-rural-public.

Q: If we're not sure whether or not we have a login already, how do we verify that?
A: To verify if you already have a login to Foundant, our grants platform, you can contact our Grant Administrator at brussell@ala.org.

Q: Can the application be printed out to use as a draft?
A: You can see/print a PDF of the application here:
http://www.ala.org/tools/sites/ala.org.tools/files/content/LTCPDFAPP.pdf

Q: Does the certifying official have to be a member of ALA if the institution is already a member?
A: No, the certifying official does not have to be an ALA member if you have another membership (institutional or personal) to meet the grant requirement.

Questions answered live:

Q: How many grants are available?
A: 650 total over two rounds in late 2020/early 2021 -- 200 in the first round, 450 in the second.

Q: Is there a required amount of participation for the community conversation? Basically what if very few people or even no one shows up to the community conversation? Should the library

keep trying to host a conversation till it gets enough participation? Change the format (i.e. if virutal, go in-person or vice-versa? Or would a survey be acceptable if no one will attend at a certain time?)?
A: No – we are not looking for a certain number of participants. The goals for the grant are for library workers to use the skills they learn from the Facilitation Skills eCourse and to provide flexible funding to libraries.

Q: Do you need a SAM account to apply?
A: No, you do not need an account. It is a government site that you can search without an account.

Q: So we need to have a community panel first to determine what is needed? Is that correct?
A: We are not expecting you to do this work in advance. You can use the knowledge you already have of the community and other data sources available to develop your proposal.

Q: Assuming we are awarded a grant, how long do we have to complete our project?
A: The project period is from February 1 – July 31, 2021 for Round 1. This is when you would be expected to take the eCourse and put together your project/host your conversation(s). You will be required to report by September 30, 2021. We allow until February 28, 2022 to spend down funds to accommodate libraries' different fiscal cycles.

Q: We were hoping to host a conversation asking what our students need for support during virtual classes. This might mean additional technology checkouts, hotspots, access to virtual mental health services, etc. If we aren't sure what we want to use the grant funds to purchase, how do we outline this in the budget request?/ Can you include money to implement ideas that come from the community meeting in the budget?
A: If you are not sure yet what the community needs and therefore do not have an exact sense of how you will be spending the funds, we encourage you to think about what you anticipate spending the funds on (eg: what are some shortfalls you anticipate in your budget?) and use this to inform your proposed budget. That being said, if your fund spenddown needs change over the course of your project, you can contact us to amend your budget as long as it remains an eligible expense.

Q: So it's ok if we haven't identified a need in our community yet if the goal of our project is to determine what those needs are and then tailor our collection development and programming to meet those needs?
A: Yes, that is completely okay!

Q: How are the funds released? During the process or at the end?
A: If selected in the first round, you will receive the entire amount of funding by January 29, 2021.

Q: We've received an ALA grant several years ago… is the Fondant system new?
A: Yes, it is fairly new (PPO started using in early 2020). You may need to create a new account.

Q: May programming materials include materials for installing something like a small book nook- furnishings, etc?
A: Yes, as long as it is related to your proposed community engagement project.

Q: What if we do not spend the entire amount? We send the rest back by the final reporting period or…?
A: No, do not return the unspent funds! If you do not feel you will be able to spend the full amount in the funding period, please indicate the amount of funds you anticipate needing to accrue in the application.

Q: Can the topic be related to children's issues? Conversation would be with adults who are stakeholders (parents/teachers/other community members)
A: Yes, it can be about children's issues. There is no limitation on audience.

Q: Do you allow extensions if the timetable doesn't work for the library?
A: If you are unable to complete in the grant window, reach out to publicprograms@ala.org and we will work with you.

Q: We need to do a strategic plan--something I've never done before and a little overwhelmed by. Especially with the great changes that we've seen in our community and world, I really want to create a strong community-led strategic plan. Would this grant be appropriate to go alongside creating a strategic plan?
A: Yes, as long as part of your process is having communications with your community (not just internal/closed conversations).

Q: Are there breakdowns with dates for implementation, final report, etc. for round 2?
A: For Round 2, only the application window (January 4 - March 4, 2021) has been published. Additional dates will be posted in the coming months.

Q: Since these times are so uncertain, do you recommend we propose both in person and virtual community engagement conversations?
A: We are looking towards librarians to determine what would work best for their community. The reviewers will not be prioritizing one type of conversation over another.

Q: If I'm planning on having multiple conversations throughout the year that address my community topics, should I focus on describing multiple conversations or use one as an example?
A: Yes, include as much detail as possible! Noting that your project is a series will help reviewers to under the breadth of your project.

Q: Are proposals that are not selected in Round 1 automatically entered into Round 2?

A: If you apply in the first wave and are not selected, we encourage you to contact PPO for peer-reviewer feedback and use it to edit your proposal. You will need to edit and resubmit your application in the system; you will not be automatically rolled over.

Q: Will a larger national issue be considered legitimate if the issue is not specific to our community due to demographics?
A: Yes, broad national issues are perfectly acceptable.

Q: Is the e-course only available after you are awarded the grant? How do we access the e-course? If we take the course now to prepare the grant, will we need to take it again if we get the grant? Do you need an ALA membership to access?
A: The eCourse is free and available to anyone (regardless of application/selection status) at http://www.ala.org/tools/librariestransform/libraries-transforming-communities/small-mid-rural-public. You do not need to retake the course if you have already taken it. An ALA membership is not required to access (you will be asked to create a free eLearning account).

Q: Is community defined as the town, or can it be a county conversation?
A: That is up to your proposal. If you are working with other libraries in your area to make it a county wide project, that is fine – just make note of it in your proposal.

Q: Do programs have to be lined up as far as date/time at the time of application?
A: No, you are not required to submit that level of information in the application.