

Igiugig Tribal Library (Igiugig, AK)

Library type: Tribal library

Topic: Affordable housing

Funds used for: Staff time and hosting meeting (supplies and child care)

What the reviewers liked about this proposal: Community input in conversation topic (use of survey)

Community and Library Information

Describe your library and the community it serves, including demographics, dynamics and key issues or challenges it faces. What should reviewers know about your library and community in order to understand your proposed community engagement project?

Igiugig Village, Alaska consists of a rural population of 70 residents, mainly Yup'ik Eskimo and Dena'ina Athabascan. The name, Igiugig, comes from the Yup'ik word "igyaraq," meaning "like a throat that swallows water." This name is fitting as the village sits at the mouth of the Kvichak River at the outlet of Lake Iliamna; the river is the throat that "swallows" the lake. The Igiugig Village Council (IVC) is the local government and serves Igiugig, a self-sufficient village with strong cultural and environmental values. IVC's mission is to provide resources, programs, and infrastructure to enhance our quality of life. As a community, we strive for a prosperous future by fulfilling our goals which include investing in lifelong education. IVC operates the Igiugig Tribal Library, which serves the local residents of Igiugig plus up to 2,000 seasonal visitors during the fishing season. The audience includes all individuals regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, or physical and mental ability. 100% of residents are low-to-moderate income. Igiugig Village population is young and rapidly growing, with nearly half of residents under age 21. The population has grown over 60% since the last census. The Igiugig Library is the sole source of library services for all of Igiugig and has been for nearly 30 years. Since 2000, and in collaboration with the Lake and Peninsula School District, the Igiugig Tribal Library has operated out of the local school to provide quality library services to all students and adult members of the community. Igiugig is one of 14 villages in the Lake and Peninsula Borough which covers a region slightly larger than West Virginia. A mere 1,631 people are scattered across an expanse where the largest village, Newhalen, holds just 189 residents. Not all villages have operating libraries. Access to Borough villages is extremely limited. None of our villages are on the road system and most do not have regularly scheduled air service. At \$400 - \$3,000, the cost of a round-trip charter flight to Anchorage is prohibitive. Transportation is further hampered by severe seasonal weather conditions. This remoteness creates a cost of living that is 80 percent higher than in the state's urban hub. The Igiugig Tribal Library, led by a 5-member advisory board, offers services such as collections lending, children's library programming (nearly 100% participation), summer reading program for all ages (over 50% of the community participates), book clubs for all ages (including the Alaska Library Association's Battle of the Books competitions), access to Interlibrary Loan and Reference services, access to the Alaska Online With Libraries (OWL) Program, homework help during school year, printing, scanning, and computer services. The Library also offers the only free internet access in the community. There is only one public-only computer terminal. Last year, library patrons enjoyed approximately 1,750 wireless sessions. The library programs are very well supported as they serve as one of the few ongoing education programs available in the community (264 people attended these programs in 2019). The Library's up-to-date collection of 11,858 titles includes Alaska books, adult and junior nonfiction books, adult and junior fiction titles, picture and board books, reference books, DVDs, videos and audiobooks. The library

materials include 11,470 books in print volumes, 30 print serial subscriptions, 358 physical video/audio material volumes, and 49 licensed electronic collections. The Library is open year-round, six days a week for a total of twelve hours. It is staffed by one off-site library director and one on-site librarian. Library staff attend annual trainings. Eighty registered patrons completed 616 total checkouts in 2019.

Conversation Topic or Issue*

Describe the topic or issue that your community engagement project will focus on. Why is it important for your library or community to discuss this particular issue/topic? How did you arrive at this particular topic/subject (e.g. did you talk with library patrons, reach out to other area organizations? Dig into data about your community)? How will your library and/or community benefit from having this/these discussion(s)?

The village lacks affordable, decent housing options for its growing population of young adults, as well as for people who have moved here from other places for jobs. For many years, residents have talked informally about the need for new homes. Now more than ever, they recognize the need to work together to address the housing shortage. While the Village has land available, the resources to actually build are limited. Being so remote, construction costs are much higher than in urban areas. This grant would provide the Library staff with the leadership training in community engagement to help Village residents realize their goal of building adequate and affordable housing, providing for the rising generation and attracting people to our small community, which addresses the related concern of sustainable future planning. The results from a recent community survey list “new housing” as the number one topic of interest for a community discussion. While there were many other responses on the community survey, the housing issue is one the Library staff feels we can make a difference by hosting a formal conversation. Having these discussions will help us look into alternative housing, as well as various organizations that may be able to help with loans, grants, or advice. A formal conversation will focus the efforts of the entire village and provide an official time and place to brainstorm solutions.

Conversation Goals*

Describe the library’s goal or purpose of your project plan. What are you aiming to accomplish? (e.g. enhance library resources based on community input; explore a topic and/or build understanding of others’ experiences; generate ideas, explore options, and make a decision; discuss an issue and collaboratively determine next steps, etc.)

The Igiugig Tribal Library’s goal is to 1) formally gather community input about the housing issue, 2) bring together community leaders to explore what resources we have as a community to tackle this issue, 3) develop specific solutions to our housing shortage, and 4) in keeping with the Village’s sustainability plan, learn about environmentally-friendly housing options (green homes with solar and wind to help reduce carbon footprint).

Conversation Planning*

How do you envision your conversation taking place? (e.g. virtual book club discussion, socially-distanced conversation outdoors at the library using the National Issues Forum Model, etc.) Do you feel you are able to describe how you envision your conversation(s) will take place? Or are you new to this and planning to learn these skills through the online course? What kind of marketing/outreach do

you plan to do for the conversation? How are you planning to share the content/outcomes of the conversation? (e.g. writing an article for the local newspaper, creating a video about what was discussed for the library's social media, etc.)

While we are new to this type of community engagement, we do have a vision. After a thorough study of the conversation methods provided in the online training course, the Library staff will develop a concrete plan about the practicalities of holding a series of public conversations. After our initial perusal of the Libraries Transforming Communities' resources, we are considering using the Conversation Café method to host multiple conversations. Due to Covid-19 concerns, we envision small group settings and also some larger meetings held over the virtual ZOOM platform. Our goal is to bring residents together to discuss ways of solving the current housing problem and to gather input from all members of the community. Outreach will also include gathering information from agencies and experts who can inform our conversations. Local advertising of our conversations will be through Library Facebook Posts, flyers posted around town, and invitations extended personally by library staff. As far as sharing the content of our community's conversation, the local newsletter, Igyararmiut Quallemciit, has agreed to run articles written by Library staff to regularly share project activities and outcomes.

Staff Training & Implementation Time Development:

*LTC training modules, familiarizing staff with possible conversation techniques, and role-playing to build confidence and select best technique(s)

*Consider hosting ZOOM meetings, and/or including an online written forum

*Planning & invites

*Staff time for outreach (regular Library Facebook Posts, Flyers, Newspaper articles)

*Staff time to actually host three formal meetings/conversations. Once the conversation techniques have been researched and the best method selected, the Library staff's goal will be to hold three conversations throughout the spring and summer. Our tentative schedule is:

January-February: Work through LTC Leadership Training & research conversation/meeting models available. Possibly work through Turning Outward Resources for Libraries first 30 Days. Select conversation models appropriate for our village.

March—Meeting with Igiugig Village Council to gain insight concerning housing issues and how to best facilitate a community-wide discussion & host Community Conversation #1: What are your concerns/ideas about the housing shortage in Igiugig?

April— Community Conversation #2 Resource sharing: What resources are available locally and through other agencies to help us build new homes in Igiugig?

May— Community Conversation #3 Moving forward: Where do we go from here? Present a report of conversation results to our local governing body, the Igiugig Village Council, to aid in the development of a concrete plan to build new homes.

Budget*

Describe your plans for the grant funds. What will you use the funding to purchase or support? Please be specific (e.g. \$1,000 will be spent on staff time to support the development and implementation of the project, \$200 will be used to purchase a Zoom Business license in order for us to virtually host our conversation). The total amount of your proposed budget plan should add up to \$3,000. Note: If you are unable to spend the entire grant down by July 31, 2021, you may accrue funds to spend through February 28, 2022. If you anticipate needing to accrue funds, please note this in your response and include your plans for spending it down.

The library staff currently operates on a part-time basis, so the budget will go primarily to staff time to support the development and implementation of the project. \$2,600 for staff time to support the training, development, and implementation of the project; \$300 for childcare during meetings (\$100/meeting); \$100 Project meeting supplies & PPE (masks, sanitizer, posterboard, markers)

\$3,000 Total