



MEMO

To: Network Advisory Council
From: Montana State Library Staff
Subject: Fiscal Year 2024 Funding Priorities
Date: February 1, 2023

This memo provides additional information about the funding priorities outlined in the accompanying spreadsheet in your meeting materials.

Sustained funding for Montana Memory Project Specialist position

The MLN Cultural Resources Committee has recommended that the MMP focus on developing out the MMP's Recollect platform, continue outreach to new contributors, educate end-users, and develop end-user engagement. Develop the policies to allow the use of new features like crowd-sourcing transcripts and getting content from individual contributors. To this end the committee has recommended hiring additional staff for the MMP to develop this content to the fullest. To fulfill this recommendation, we request the funding to continue to employ a full-time MMP Project Specialist. This position has been funded for the last 18 months with ARPA funds. We request one FTE for the MMP Project Specialist.

Montana Memory Project Collection funding

The MMP is also requesting funding to assist cultural institutions in preparing content for addition to the MMP. This funding would cover the cost of digitizing content or creating born digital content, and/or creating the necessary metadata for the content to be discoverable. We are requesting at least \$6000 dollars. This will be distributed to eligible applicants for requests up to \$1500 to pay a vendor or contractor to complete the project work.

In-person Fall Workshops

This request would provide funding for presenters, meeting space, food, travel costs for presenters, and supplies for an in-person MSL Fall Workshops event. MSL does not charge any registration fees for library staff and trustees to attend Fall Workshops.

Public Libraries Survey software

MSL's Data Coordinator works in partnership with the Statewide Library Consultants to prepare and collect data for the Public Libraries Survey. This work includes designing and demonstrating survey collection methods to local library directors and trustees so that they can advocate for



funding and communicate outcomes to local government, their vested partners, and constituents. The data can be used for benchmarking which helps libraries improve and provide the best services possible to their communities. The requested funding would be used to enter a new contract for survey collection software. The library's current contract sunsets January 2023. A dual-purpose software tool can be prioritized that can help address the PLS and other NAC priorities such as the comparable wage and occupational standard survey.

Qualitative Analysis software

As the Network Advisory Council and Montana State Library implements the MLN structure, it is important to be able to articulate success and evaluate outcomes. While MSL collects qualitative responses from patrons and librarians regarding multiple core services, the agency does not presently have the tools to effectively analyze this information. For example, the “I Love My Library” survey produced 503 patron responses. Qualitative analysis software can help turn this rich information into actionable data. Software will be used to find insights in unstructured qualitative data to present sound conclusions, drive effective outcomes, and increase project impact. With proper analysis, data will help the NAC make defensible recommendations so that MSL can effectively execute and administer core services. The proposed funds will cover the expense of one software license for MSL’s Data Coordinator for NVivo or a similar product.

Ready 2 Read: Continue funding READSquared for June 1, 2023 – May 30, 2024

READSquared is an online reading program resource which offers customization and configuration of summer reading programs and other reading and learning programs, as well as readers’ advisory tools for all ages and all reading levels.

MSL’s READSquared contract started during COVID, in May 2020 with a 40-library contract. 21 libraries participated throughout COVID. That contract was renewed for another year, until May 2022. Both years were paid for with federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

For the May 2022 – May 2023 contract, MSL contacted participating libraries to see who wanted to continue using READSquared. 6 libraries responded. MSL negotiated a smaller contract of \$3,352 to renew READSquared for another year (about \$559 per library). The currently participating libraries are:

- Dillon Public Library
- North Jefferson County Library
- Boulder Community Library
- Ronan Library District
- North Lake Public Library District
- Sidney-Richland County Library

For the May 2022 – May 2023 contract, 7 months (\$1,990) were paid for with ARPA funds, and 5 months (\$1,362) were covered with Lifelong Learning budget funds. This was because ARPA funds expired after December 2022.

Current Usage:

- Boulder Community Library: 348 participants; used for Summer Reading Program

- Since using READSquared we have seen an increase in the number of patrons participating in the summer program. We have heard from quite a few parents about how they are not always in town on the days we have summer programs, so they have not been able to participate. Summer is a busy time for ranchers and they cannot always make it into town so they have been relying heavily on READSquared
- Ronan Library District: 80 participants; used for summer reading, but hopefully can use it for 1000 Books Before Kindergarten eventually.
 - READSquared is a huge timesave for us, allowing us to focus more on activities, storytimes, and spending time with our patrons, mostly because we do not have to enter their data
 - The variety of reports is very useful for us
 - We are able to offer more ways for patrons to read and receive “points” with very little extra work on our end.
 - Secret Codes for attending storytime, which the Kids LOVE to get that little slip of paper with the secret code they get to enter on the app.
 - "Missions" are really fun for the patrons and us. We have missions (completing multiple activities completes a mission) set up, which include not only reading but writing, spending time outdoors, watching documentaries, playing board games, and more. Activities in the missions allow us to set up "proof of completion" in a variety of ways, such as responding to questions, uploading pictures, checking a box, etc.... We LOVE the pictures we see of our kiddos reading to a dog or at the City park, etc....
 - We no longer have to deal with Envelopes full of tickets for the Grand Prize Drawings, because that is all included in the app.
 - We are able to send emails to all the participants.
 - Patrons and staff are used to using ReadSquared now and we really don't want to have to change, AGAIN, how we and the patrons track everything for Summer Reading.
- North Lake Public Library District: 810 participants; used for summer reading and 1000 Books Before Kindergarten.
- Dillon Public Library: used for summer reading and 1000 Books Before Kindergarten; may also use for winter reading programs.
- North Jefferson County Library: 350 participants; used for summer reading.
 - Staff enjoys the ability to consolidate and streamline tracking, and the app can meet family needs either online or on paper. READSquared is not very user friendly, but staff are able to customize website, app, etc, and there are many READSquared creations from other libraries that are available for use which is helpful.
 - Hoping to deploy READSquared all year long for different programs and age levels – staffing shortages are preventing that right now.
- Sidney Richland County Library: used for four different programs at the library, including summer reading. Staff loves it.



Costs and Proposal:

- Renewal costs for June 2023 – May 2024 are \$3,352, which comes out to ~\$559 per library. The cost of individual libraries contracting with READSquared is \$595 per library.
- Each library pays \$150 towards the contract, with LSTA funds covering the rest.
 - Libraries contribute \$900 total
 - LSTA pays for \$2,452 total.

Sustained funding for electronic magazines and self-paced courses in MontanaLibrary2Go

In January 2021, MSL used federal pandemic relief funds to pilot a simultaneous access (always available) e-magazine collection via the MontanaLibrary2Go OverDrive Libby platform. Circulation from this collection has increased over the past year by 46%, to 62,604 checkouts across 100 different library locations in calendar year 2022, or \$0.48 per checkout. This accounts for 5% of total checkouts from MontanaLibrary2Go. Furthermore, the simultaneous access model allows patrons to check something out immediately without having to place a hold, perhaps mitigating the dissatisfaction of having to wait for bestseller titles with long holds queues.

Universal Class is a self-paced online continuing education platform that has partnered with OverDrive to provide seamless access to courses via the Libby app. This platform offers over 600 courses, many of which offer continuing education units (CEUs) or credits. MontanaLibrary2Go patrons can access Universal Class by checking out a 7-day pass through Libby. They can check out the pass as many times as they need. In addition to being available to all Montanans through their participating public libraries, Universal Class can also be useful to library staff seeking continuing education credit or looking for self-paced options to improve their professional skillsets.

If additional state funding becomes available for this program following the current legislative session, then this request will not be necessary. These subscriptions are currently funded through calendar year 2023.

Downloadable and streaming e-content for Montana K-12 students

Between 2020 – 2022, MSL invested \$165,000 in federal pandemic relief funds in the shared content budget and enrollment budget for the independently administered Montana Schools Shared OverDrive Program. Schools are contractually ineligible to participate in MontanaLibrary2Go. The MSSOP provides access to age-appropriate materials for grades K-12, selected by school library specialists, via a child-friendly app called Sora.

As a result of MSL's investment, 168 Montana schools were able to join the consortium at no cost; student registration in the program increased by 213%, to 27,053; and circulation increased by 162%, to 129,983 items in the past year.

Continued support for this program would help sustain access to a robust collection of e-books and e-audiobooks at a significant cost savings to school districts that might not otherwise be able to offer this collection to their students. This program also reduces the collection development workload on individual teacher-librarians, as selection responsibilities are covered at the consortium level.



Increased funding for Montana Courier Network

If additional state funding becomes available for this program following the current legislative session, then this request will not be necessary. Any additional funding for the courier program would be helpful, but other programs' needs should be addressed first.

Montana Shared Catalog New Library Migrations

The Montana Shared Catalog is a cooperative project that allows member libraries to pool resources for their library automation system. This request would provide funding for the migration of new libraries joining the MSC in the coming fiscal year. This is an estimated maximum cost. The cost can vary as it depends on the number of new applicants and the migration service of our vendor is priced according to the size of the incoming library. There is currently one library expressing interest in applying to join the MSC but the application has not opened yet so the number of migrating libraries has not been set.