

OREGON LIBRARIES SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

State Library CARES Act Spending,
October 2020 - September 2021

THE FUNDING

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed by Congress in March of 2020 to support the economic fallout that resulted from the nationwide shutdown at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The State Library of Oregon was allocated \$381,108 of CARES Act money through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). IMLS requested the funds be used to address digital inclusion and pandemic response, and that poverty/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), unemployment, and broadband availability data be used to inform targeted efforts. The State Library elected to offer non-competitive subgrants to libraries located in counties of highest need, and to pilot two regional digital inclusion projects.

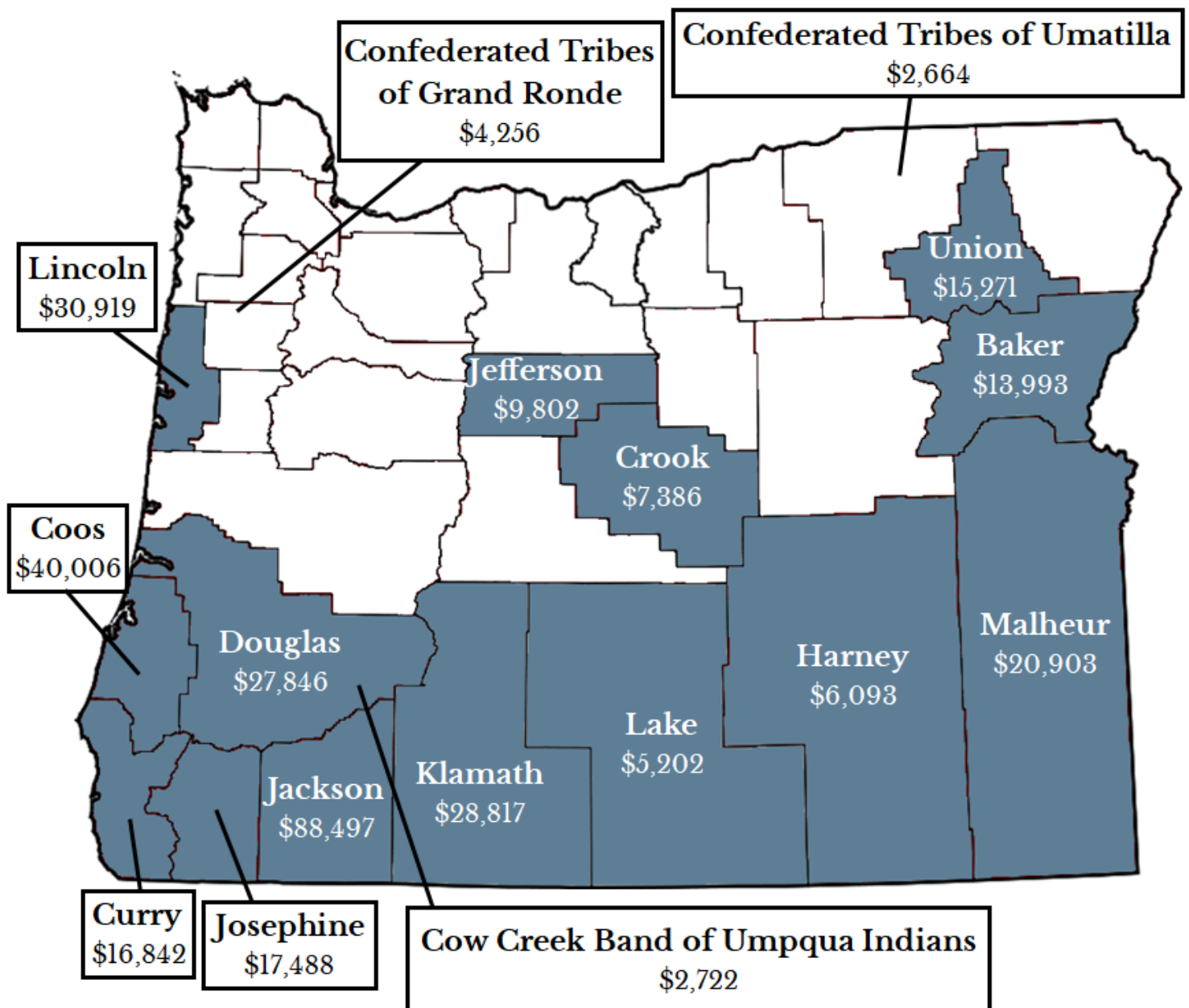
THE RESULT

While many public buildings – libraries, schools, and other vital community spaces – were closed, libraries used these funds to increase access to web-based services and resources for patrons who could not afford internet and/or devices, and in remote areas where internet access is unstable or lacking. As a result of these activities, Oregonians across the state were able to access information (health, employment, learning, etc.), perform work, attend meetings, apply for jobs, attend online programs, maintain contact with relatives, attend classes (K-12 and college-level), and participate in community and civic organizations.

GRANTS TO LIBRARIES

The State Library awarded subgrants to 42 public, tribal, and community college libraries located in counties of highest need. Each library was allocated a \$2,000 minimum grant, and the remainder was distributed based on service population.

GRANT AWARDS BY COUNTY AND TRIBAL GOVERNMENT



Grantees used CARES funds to help their communities bridge the digital divide and to deliver library services during the pandemic.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

INCREASING INFORMATION ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY ACROSS COMMUNITIES



49% of grantees lent hotspots and devices in remote areas without stable internet access.

“We desperately needed a way to get folks computer access that didn't involve being physically in the building. This [grant] enabled us to buy five laptops and a tablet to check out. It was so helpful to be able to give folks the computer access they needed.”
~ *Flora M. Laird Memorial Library (Coos County)*

33% of grantees supported student learning and engagement through device lending and educational resources.

“Our hotspots came to the rescue of local students shortly after launch of the loan program when a COVID-19 exposure forced school officials to order study from home and the school ran short of enough WiFi hotspots to go around due to technical difficulties with their supply. To date [May 2021], the hotspots have supported over 179 homework hours with an average per day usage of 2.5 hours.” ~ *Baker County Libraruy District*



23% of grantees boosted wi-fi and/or upgraded public computer stations to provide internet inside and outside library buildings.

“Our community lacked a location of any kind where video-conferencing based ‘meetings’ could be conducted by members of the public. The outfitting of our video conference room permanently addresses that void. [...] This will be a valuable resource in our small and under-served city for years to come and meets many formerly unaddressed needs.” ~ *C. Giles Hunt Memorial Library (Douglas County)*



DELIVERING LIBRARY SERVICES DURING PANDEMIC CLOSURES

PROVIDING ACCESS THROUGH DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES



21% of grantees produced online public programs for youth and adults.

“Thanks to grant funds, the library has been able to upgrade equipment and software to provide high-quality online programs. These programs have been used in educational and home settings to help offset the lack of in-person programming.” ~ *Jefferson County Library District*

30% of grantees used pandemic mitigation efforts to keep staff and patrons safe in open buildings.

“With the funding we installed permanent sneeze guards and air purifiers. This enabled us to protect our staff and patrons, consequently we managed to reopen our libraries in a limited way. One of my favorite quotes from a patron: ‘Thank you for being there, without the library I wouldn't have survived the pandemic.’” ~ *Klamath County Library Service District*



20% of grantees purchased digital resources to meet high demand.

“We considered that many of our patrons regularly used the library to sit and read magazines and newspapers. Because of the pandemic, they were no longer able to do this, so we used our remaining CARES funds to do the next best thing. We purchased access to Pressreader, Flipster, and quite a few newspapers and created a new page on our website in order to share them.” ~ *Bandon Public Library (Coos County)*

SPOTLIGHT ON JACKSON COUNTY

Jackson County Library Services used their allocation to establish a Direct Access to Resources and Technology (DART) van. The DART van enabled the library to bring library and technology-based services out into the county at a time when the community was facing reduced library hours, lack of available technology devices, and closure of local workforce partnership offices. This was particularly important for low-income areas hit hard by the COVID pandemic where many families were working to get back on their feet.



The van traveled around the community providing internet access through a mobile hotspot, supplying devices for community members to use on site, and delivering programs such as digital literacy for seniors, work readiness for job seekers, and general library instruction for all. The van also served as a free lunch site at area schools during summers.

Southern Oregon was also the site of several highly destructive fires in fall 2020 that destroyed the homes of thousands of residents. With DART, the library was able to provide service to those who were unhoused or living in temporary housing, helping them to gain access to vital documents and resources to rebuild after losing their homes.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH DIGITAL INCLUSION

The State Library allocated CARES Act Funds toward two pilot projects to provide job-related online tools to increase workforce success.



BrainFuse HelpNow and JobNow: \$38,500

Libraries of Eastern Oregon (50 public libraries in 15 Eastern Oregon counties) piloted HelpNow and JobNow, two online services from Brainfuse that offer professional, live tutoring for students and mentoring for job seekers.

Northstar Digital Literacy: \$3,900

Four community colleges and one public library piloted Northstar Digital Literacy, a set of online, self-paced digital literacy assessments and tutorials. that help users build the basic skills needed to perform tasks on computers and online in daily life, employment, and school.



"As we are a rural community college we have a lot of students who just don't have the digital background they need to succeed. By offering access to Northstar (especially as we don't currently offer Computer Science courses at the college) students are able to build or brush up on digital skills as they need to." - *Oregon Coast Community College Library*