



Application ID

2024-5766 NEA Big Read

Application Type

NEA Big Read

Organization Information

Lewis & Clark Library
120 South Last Chance Gulch Street
Helena, MT 59601-4165
Phone: 406-447-1690

Mission Statement

The mission of the Lewis & Clark Library is to provide the best possible services and materials for informational, educational, cultural, or recreational use by the community.

Annual Operating Budget

\$1M - \$4.9M

Location Designation

Metropolitan

Applicant

Suzanne Schwichtenberg
Adult Services Librarian
120 South Last Chance Gulch Street
Helena, MT 59601-4165

Phone: 406-447-6681
Email: suzanne@lclibrary.org

Publicity name

What should we call your organization when we conduct any future publicity?

Lewis & Clark Library

Project Summary

Please provide one to two sentences that summarize your project in plain, easy to understand language. This description will be displayed publicly when the grantees are announced.

Lewis & Clark Library and partners in Montana are exploring "Fuzz" by Mary Roach with which we will offer forums on land and wildlife ethics with a tribal perspective, hunter ethics, government wildlife management in Montana, a nonprofit's goals to connect, conserve, and share prairie grassland and its biodiversity. We'll learn about social-ecological systems and increase awareness about wildlife with activities, films, art exhibits, writing workshops—including an open mic night, book discussions and author Mary Roach's appearance to round out this expedition into Our Nature for the 2025 Big Read.

Short description

Please write a brief, one-paragraph, high-level description of your project. Cover the key highlights of your project and the minimum programming requirements as stated in the application guidelines.

We will have a daytime kickoff with a book giveaway and snacks at the Library on October 1, followed the next day by a book giveaway with at a local tap house in the evening. We will inspire meaningful conversations with five book discussions including one after a group bike ride, another while walking on our local trails. We will also inspire meaningful conversations with a community meal. Presentations: Indigenous wildlife ethics, government wildlife management in Montana, ethical hunting, a nonprofit's film and conversation about their goals to connect, conserve, and share prairie grassland and its biodiversity, and socio-ecological systems with experts in the field. Artistic project or activity that engages the community: exhibition of wildlife photography by local college teacher Larry Taylor. "Voices of the Big Read" open mic night with writers who engaged in the writing workshops, and lastly, author Mary Roach's appearance in Helena. Our three creative writing workshops: nature essays, science and nature in poetry, and nonfiction in the first person (not memoirs). As mentioned previously, the event that allows community voices to be shared publicly will be an open mic night where only workshop attendees can read. The public is welcome to be in the audience.

Prior grant recipient?

Have you received a grant from Arts Midwest before?

Yes

Project Start Date

When will the project begin?

10/01/2025

Project End Date

When will the project end?

10/30/2025

Book Title

Fuzz by Mary Roach

Theme statement

Please write a brief, one-paragraph statement on how the chosen title connects to your community and the theme: Our Nature

While organizing our plans with the theme "Our Nature" we realized that the NEA Big Read goals were organically intertwined. To inspire a meaningful conversation also necessitates elevation of many voices, which can build strong connections. We hope our programming plans reflect that kinship. Mary Roach's "Fuzz" cracks open the messiness of several societies trying to control nature and some of those conflicts, hopes and hard work are alive and well in Montana. Our state has over 30 million acres of state and federal lands, nearly one third of our land mass. "Montana provides habitat for 109 mammals, 456 birds, 15 bat species, and over 90 fish species with 226 of these animals being species of concern and 59 having special status (rare, threatened or endangered)" -dnrc.mt.gov. With a human population of a bit over 1.1 million there's a lot of strong feelings and actions about what should be done with the land, flora, fauna, and water rights, sometimes in a precarious balance with the human livelihoods. Montana also grapples with exploitation of natural resources. On the converse are devout conservation beliefs and efforts, and good faith wildlife management. Fuzz is a common denominator for listening, learning, conversation and collaboration, for artistic expression and creation, self-reflection and it is a path towards hope, courage, and connection with one another and our natural world.

Book quantity

Approximately how many books do you intend to order for your programming?

1000

Requested Amount

What is the grant amount you're seeking? Please refer to the application guidelines for minimum/maximum limits. This field will automatically round to the nearest \$10 increment.

\$20,000

Proposed number of partner organizations

9

Proposed number of book discussions

Must be at least 3

7

Proposed total number of events (including book discussions)

24

Anticipated adults served

An estimate of individuals 18 and older to be served by the project.

900

Anticipated youths served

An estimate of individuals 17 and younger to be served by the project.

100

Anticipated total participants

This will auto-calculate based on your responses above and after you click the "Save" button.

1000

Organization description narrative

Briefly describe your organization's history and achievements.

The mission of the Lewis & Clark Library is to provide the best possible services and materials for informational, educational, cultural, or recreational use by the community. Native Americans have lived in the area for over 12,000 years. The Helena Valley was a travel corridor for many tribes, including the Salish, Blackfeet, Crow, and Bannock. In 1864, four miners discovered gold in a creek, and called it Last Chance because that's what it was for them. Four years later, Helena was booming and townsfolk went door to door with wheelbarrows collecting books for a subscription library. In 1886 citizens voted to make it free for all.

Through multiple city-wide fires before 1880, an earthquake in 1935 and six different locations, the library grew in popularity. In the 1970s, it became a joint city-county venture with a name change to Lewis & Clark Library, a new building on Last Chance Gulch, and branch libraries in Lincoln and Augusta, each being 50+ miles away. We added a branch in East Helena, and enriched our county-wide community with Outreach Services including a Bookmobile, Book Bike and more.

The main library remodeled in 2021 adding gender neutral bathrooms and other accessibility features including better lighting and easy-to-read signage. We enhanced our entryway and finally added mitigations for fires and earthquakes. Today we continue to offer high quality programming and are increasing the diversity of our collection. In 2023 we welcomed over 226,000 visitors and circulated over 431,000 items.

We received the Excellent Library Service Award from the Montana State Library Commission in 2018. Grant awards include Will Eisner Graphic Novel Innovation Grant as well as the "World War I and America" which was a Library of America Project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in partnership with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the National WWI Museum and Memorial, Wounded Warriors Project, and the United States World War One Centennial Commission. We've been honored with multiple NEA Big Read grants, Town Pump Charitable Foundation's Keep Kids Reading grants, and a Jan Stauber Grant from the Beacon Society. Each branch participates in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program. For solar panels the library received a grant from Montana's Universal Systems Benefits. The Library and Lewis & Clark Library Foundation together have hosted best-selling authors including CJ Box (2025), Jacqueline Winspear, Shelby Van Pelt, Amor Towles, Joy Harjo and more.

Programming description

1. Describe your programming plans in detail, including types of activities and locations, and involvement of local talent (e.g., writers, artists from other disciplines, teachers, field experts) and art works (e.g., companion books, films, visual art, etc.). Be sure that your plans meet the minimum project requirements outlined in the [guidelines](#).
2. Explain how your programs meet your goals and the goals of the NEA Big Read: to inspire meaningful conversations, celebrate local creativity, elevate a variety of voices and perspectives, and build stronger connections in each community. Explain how you plan to assess those goals to determine if they are met.

Kickoffs: one is at the Library in the afternoon where we'll provide snacks and a book giveaway. The second kickoff will be a book giveaway at Headwaters Crafthouse with our partner Helena College the next evening.

Seven book discussions: at Augusta Library, Helena Library, East Helena Library, Helena College, Montana Book Co.'s LGBTQ+ Book Club (companion title), a communal mountain bike ride with the Montana Bicycle Club with a discussion at Blackfoot Brewery, and a walk & talk with the Merlin Philosophy nonprofit.

Presentations: lecture on socio-ecological systems at Helena College. The Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes will share their land and wildlife ethic with a tribal perspective at the Library. Louise Ogemahgeshig Fischer, Anishinaabe, will talk about living with the land at Helena Avenue Theatre. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) will discuss wildlife management at Montana WILD, the educational arm of FWP. Montana Historical Society will provide two lectures tying "Fuzz" to Montana history at the Library. The Boone & Crockett Club will talk about hunter and conservation ethics at Montana WILD. We are working on classroom integration with speakers and high school and Helena College students. Our final presentation is author Mary Roach at Carroll College.

Artistic projects or activities: Wildlife photographer Larry Taylor will exhibit his work at the Library. American Prairie is a nonprofit working to rewild acres of prairie grassland. We will host a short film and Q&A with them at the Library. We are also hosting a community meal at a local church.

Creative writing workshops: Nature essays, science in poetry, and nonfiction writing. These will take place at the Library. We are confirming writers to teach the essays and nonfiction classes. The science in poetry instructor is confirmed, Michael Smith from Montana State University. After discussing example poems with respect to their scientific and natural symmetrical basis, students will respond with their own poetry.

Community voices to be shared publicly: Voices of the Big Read is an open mic where only students of the writing workshops read. The public is welcome as the audience. This will take place at Helena Avenue Theatre.

We see NEA's goals as blended objectives. Inspiring meaningful conversations also elevates many voices, which build strong connections. To begin, we want people to have the chance to read the book before the Big Read starts. We will start giving away books about 10-14 days ahead of the kickoff. We found that if people haven't read the book they are disinclined to go to programs or join in conversations. We will thoughtfully prepare for book discussions to ensure meaningful conversations.

Presentations: We are offering Indigenous world views as well as the ethics of hunters. The experts in socio-ecological systems will inspire meaningful conversations long after the program ends. Sharing FWP's wildlife management knowledge will build stronger connections via meaningful conversations. The same thing happens with the Montana Historical Society lectures.

Food has the power to bring people together. Sharing a meal and conversation builds relationships which build stronger communities. Our community meal will do just that.

The creative writing workshops for adults absolutely celebrate local creativity and elevate a variety of voices and perspectives. Once the teacher creates that safe space, people burst open with words, tears, laughter, memories. These experiences change a person, usually profoundly, for the good.

The Voices of the Big Read Open Mic Night is a bright celebration of local creativity and elevation of different voices and perspectives. We will hold the event at Helena Avenue Theatre. It can be the first time a writer has stood up and shared their work out loud. Sharing these experiences creates stronger bonds between the writers and the audience and builds unity.

To effectively assess community engagement, we will use a variety of data collection tools like surveys, attendance counts, social media analytics. Our surveys will ask questions about perceptions, suggestions, and levels of participation. We will assess the community's reactions with informal questionnaires at events for qualitative feedback. We will meet with our partners post-Big Read and reflect on how meaningful and positive our impact was on our community and what we can improve for next time.

Project partnerships narrative

1. Describe your partnerships with libraries (as applicable) and community organizations. Indicate if these are new partnerships or describe your history of working with these partners.
2. Explain the role each partner will play in your program.

Our partners are enthusiastic about the Big Read! Our synergy is generating new ideas and connections as I write.

Helena College: long-standing partnership. HC has hosted many speakers and book discussions. 2025 role: book discussion, lecture, off-site kickoff host, and including “Fuzz” in their science courses. Also a book giveaway location.

Helena High School: long-standing partnership. The HHS librarian shares information about Lewis & Clark Library services and teen programs. 2025 role: Blending the Big Read with curriculum. Possibilities: incorporate “Fuzz” in English classes through reading projects with class discussions connecting the book’s themes to students’ experiences. “Fuzz” as a supplementary text in science classes, exploring relevant topics specific to Montana. Social Studies Classes: explore how human interactions with wildlife reflect broader societal issues; drawing connections between the book, current events, and their own experiences. Art Classes: encourage students to create artwork inspired by the book.

Montana Historical Society: long-standing partnership. They provide speakers who connect Big Read books to Montana history. We have also hosted their lecture series at the library for two years while their new building is under construction. 2025 role: provide a speaker connecting “Fuzz” to Montana history.

Montana State University: past collaboration. MSU instructors have presented at the Library over the years. 2025 role: Michael Smith will teach the Science in Poetry workshop.

Lewis & Clark Library Foundation: long-standing partnership. LCLF supports Lewis & Clark Library by providing access to the highest quality library and information services for all members of our communities. 2025 role: books purchases and program support.

Montana Book Co. past collaboration. They primarily sell books at author events. 2025 role: hosting a companion book discussion with their LGBTQ+ Book Club and selling books at Mary Roach's event.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks: past collaboration. FWP taught a compass workshop for a previous Big Read. 2025 role: a talk on wildlife management in Montana. Their education center, Montana WILD, will host some speakers.

Merlin, a non-profit dedicated to enriching lives, strengthening the community and environment through philosophy: past collaboration. The Library has hosted some philosophy-author programs. 2025 role: lead a companion book discussion and walk.

University of Montana: past collaboration. UM instructors have presented at the Library over the years. 2025 role: UM’s Human Dimensions Lab will talk about how people interact with the natural world and how these human dimensions inform natural resource management (socio-ecological systems).

Boone & Crockett Club: New. 2025 role: presentation on hunter and conservation ethics from America's

oldest hunter-conservation organization.

Montana Bicycle Guild: New. 2025 role: lead a mountain bike ride through the hills in Helena, and then lead a book discussion.

American Prairie: New. Together we will show a short film about AP's work to connect, conserve, and share a vast prairie reserve in Montana followed by a Q&A.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe: New. 2025 role: presentation on Tribal fish, wildlife, and recreation resources, philosophies and goals that will foster conservation ethics with a tribal perspective.

Provide a description of community outreach

1. Describe the community you plan to reach with your programming and explain how you will engage individuals of diverse backgrounds and abilities.
2. Describe how you will make your proposed activities accessible to people with disabilities.

Lewis & Clark County is made up of the city of Helena and "the Valley" where 94% of the ~75,000 residents live. The rest of our population is scattered around the rest of the 3,500 square miles—bigger than the state of Delaware. We plan to reach library patrons and visitors, self-described non-users and underserved communities within the county with the NEA Big Read.

We will reach Library patrons and visitors with our four branch libraries. Our Outreach Services department focuses on the underserved communities in our county. Our partner organizations reach different pockets of adults: Helena College is a two-year college (adults), Montana Historical Society trends toward retirees, Helena High School focuses on teens.

A 2024 community survey found commonalities of those who self-identified as Non-Library Users: 25 – 55 years old, work full-time, get news from the local newspaper and social media sites other than Facebook and Instagram and find out about events primarily by word of mouth. Interests: outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, hiking and camping. They haven't been to a library for at least two years. They just don't think about going there, or our branches aren't conveniently located. Our strategy to reach non-users is to partner with outdoor enthusiasts: bicyclists, hunters, hikers. We will go to a brewery and a tap house, and Montana WILD, where several hunting, fishing and other outdoor groups meet.

Underserved communities in Montana include Indigenous people, our aging population, LGBTQ+, rural residents, low-income, and disabled Montanans.



2024-5766 NEA Big Read

We will engage the Indigenous community with a discussion about Montana's natural resources and Indigenous ethics about wildlife and nature.

For our aging population we will have large type books, digital audiobooks and eBooks, we will use microphones for speakers at the library, go to retirement communities to share books, and offer programs during daylight hours.

Our LGBTQ+ community loves Montana Book Co! They will host a companion title discussion at their LGBTQ+ Book Club.

Lewis & Clark County's rural and low-income communities are visited regularly by the Bookmobile. Our outreach team goes all over the Helena and the county with stops at rural schools, rural stores, Hutterite colonies, mobile home parks, retirement and assisted living homes, the food bank, low-income public housing, lower income neighborhood schools and parks, and the health center that provides medical services and case management to homeless individuals and families.

We will make our activities accessible to people with diverse abilities with an ASL interpreter at the author event, Large Type books, free digital ebooks and downloadable audiobooks. We will use microphones whenever possible. We continue to ask our disability advocates at Ability Montana how we can increase access.

Budget

| Expense Description | Paid by Grant | Paid by Applicant | Paid by 3rd Party | In-kind | Total Match |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Mary Roach fee | \$8,000.00 | \$8,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$8,000.00 |
| venue rentals | \$0.00 | \$2,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$2,000.00 |
| 1000 copies Fuzz | \$8,000.00 | \$5,000.00 | \$4,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$9,000.00 |
| 7 speakers fees | \$3,000.00 | \$2,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$2,000.00 |
| companion books | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$1,000.00 |
| publicity | \$1,000.00 | \$2,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$2,000.00 |
| project staff salaries | \$0.00 | \$9,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$9,000.00 |
| Total Project Expenses: | \$20,000.00 | \$28,000.00 | \$5,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$33,000.00 |



Use this space to offer more detail about your budget

Supporting Documentation

Supporting documentation

Upload relevant information. Click Browse Files to get started.

[HC_Big_Read_Letter_of_Support_2025.pdf](#)
153.2 KB - 01/26/2025 2:04 AM

[HHS_letter_of_support_2025.pdf](#)
103.5 KB - 01/26/2025 2:04 AM

[LCLF_letter_of_support_2025_with_signature.pdf](#)
131.1 KB - 01/26/2025 2:04 AM

Total Files: 3



Application ID

2025-6270 NEA Big Read

Application Type

NEA Big Read

Organization Information

Nevada County Library
980 Helling Way
Nevada City, CA 95959
Phone: 530-265-1407

Mission Statement

Create an inclusive environment that fosters discovery; connect our community with innovative opportunities; inspire lifelong learning and personal growth

Annual Operating Budget

\$5M - \$10M

Location Designation

Rural

Applicant

Laura Pappani
Librarian III
980 HELLING WAY
Nevada City, CA 95959

Phone: 530-265-4606
Email: laura.pappani@nevadacountyca.gov

Publicity name

What should we call your organization when we conduct any future publicity?

Nevada County Library

Project Summary

Please provide one to two sentences that summarize your project in plain, easy to understand language. This description will be displayed publicly when the grantees are announced.

The Nevada County Library will celebrate Daniel Mason's book, "North Woods," while presenting a variety of engaging and creative public programs designed to evoke and explore the NEA Big Read theme, "Our Nature." Programs will include panel and community discussions about the effects of Gold Rush mining on the local landscape, an interactive walking tour emphasizing how Nevada City has changed over time, workshops for writing poetry about nature and connection, book club discussions, and an author visit by Daniel Mason.

Short description

Please write a brief, one-paragraph, high-level description of your project. Cover the key highlights of your project and the minimum programming requirements as stated in the application guidelines.

The Nevada County Library's proposed 2026 NEA Big Read program, centered around North Woods by Daniel Mason, aims to engage participants in a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between the natural environment and the people who interact with it. The NEA Big Read program will include a variety of events designed to foster engagement with the book and its themes. The kick-off event will be a discussion on the historical impact of gold mining in Nevada County and its negative effects on the physical landscape and the indigenous people (the Nisenan). Additionally, three poetry-writing workshops will encourage participants to reflect on and express their personal connections to nature, exploring the role of the natural world in fostering hope and resilience. Several book discussions will promote conversation in small-group settings.

An expert-led walking tour of Nevada City will offer insight into the evolution of the community, highlighting specific buildings and how the physical environment has changed over time. A "Living Library" event will allow participants to "borrow" a long-time resident to engage in conversations about how both the landscape and the community have transformed. The culminating event will be a visit by Daniel Mason, providing an opportunity for the community to hear directly from the author about the themes in North Woods and their relevance to contemporary life. This program will create a space for reflection, conversation, and connection, fostering a deeper understanding of the powerful ways our environment shapes our lives and communities.



Prior grant recipient?

Have you received a grant from Arts Midwest before?

Yes

Project Start Date

When will the project begin?

02/01/2026

Project End Date

When will the project end?

04/30/2026

Book Title

North Woods by Daniel Mason

Theme statement

Please write a brief, one-paragraph statement on how the chosen title connects to your community and the theme: Our Nature

Daniel Mason's *North Woods* resonates deeply with the history and landscape of Nevada County, California, where the physical environment has long shaped the lives and stories of its people. Nevada County's majestic forests, a defining feature of the Sierra Nevada foothills, echo the book's exploration of the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world. During the Gold Rush, these forests bore witness to waves of settlers seeking fortune and new beginnings, emblematic of humanity's enduring hope and courage. However, this chapter in history also carries the legacy of displacement and adversity faced by the Nisenan people, whose deep connection to the land was disrupted by colonization. Their rich traditions, tied to stewardship of the environment, remind us of the profound wisdom in living harmoniously with nature—an idea central to Mason's narrative.

North Woods delves into how landscapes hold memories, offering a sense of continuity and resilience amidst change. This theme mirrors the way Nevada County's rugged beauty inspires reflection, connection, and perseverance. Whether it's through the enduring spirit of the Nisenan or modern-day stewardship of local forests and rivers, Nevada County exemplifies how our physical environment fosters hope and bonds that transcend time.

The NEA Big Read grant would allow us to explore these themes and engage our community in a dialogue about history, identity, and our shared responsibility to the land that sustains us.

Book quantity

Approximately how many books do you intend to order for your programming?

400

Requested Amount

What is the grant amount you're seeking? Please refer to the application guidelines for minimum/maximum limits. This field will automatically round to the nearest \$10 increment.

\$19,920

Proposed number of partner organizations

11

Proposed number of book discussions

Must be at least 3

7

Proposed total number of events (including book discussions)

13

Anticipated adults served

An estimate of individuals 18 and older to be served by the project.

10,000

Anticipated youths served

An estimate of individuals 17 and younger to be served by the project.

5000

Anticipated total participants

This will auto-calculate based on your responses above and after you click the "Save" button.

15000

Organization description narrative

Briefly describe your organization's history and achievements.

The Nevada County Library (NCL) system was established in 1972, uniting the individual city libraries that had served the towns of Truckee, Grass Valley, and Nevada City since as early as 1902. Over the past five decades, NCL has garnered significant community support, as reflected in the successful passage of three sales tax measures aimed at funding library services. The most recent measure, approved in 2017, passed with 70.77% of the vote.

NCL strives to offer an array of services and programs that go above and beyond the expectations of its rural northern California community. The library actively promotes diverse and inclusive programming, bolstered by long-standing partnerships with organizations such as the Nisenan Tribe of the Nevada City Rancheria and Color Me Human, a local group dedicated to creating a safer environment for BIPOC and LGBTQAI+ residents of Nevada County. Additionally, NCL supports social equity and public safety through collaborations with the Yuba Harm Reduction Collective and Nevada County Public Health Department's Harm Reduction services.

The library also works closely with local schools and arts organizations, including the Nevada County Arts Council, and the Nevada County Master Gardeners, fostering connections that enrich the community. For over 20 years, NCL has successfully hosted a countywide community read program and has participated in the NEA Big Read initiative three times. When NCL was first selected to be a part of the NEA Big Read in 2020, it enabled the library to host author Emily St. John Mandel for an online author visit. Since then, NCL has established a track record of very successful author visits, with packed houses and lots of positive feedback from the public.

All NCL's programming, including its involvement in the NEA Big Read, aligns with its mission to create an inclusive environment that encourages discovery, connects the rural community to innovative opportunities, and inspires lifelong learning and personal growth.

Programming description

1. Describe your programming plans in detail, including types of activities and locations, and involvement of local talent (e.g., writers, artists from other disciplines, teachers, field experts) and art works (e.g., companion books, films, visual art, etc.). Be sure that your plans meet the minimum project requirements outlined in the [guidelines](#).

2. Explain how your programs meet your goals and the goals of the NEA Big Read: to inspire meaningful conversations, celebrate local creativity, elevate a variety of voices and perspectives, and build stronger connections in each community. Explain how you plan to assess those goals to determine if they are met.

The Nevada County Library (NCL) will launch 2026 Nevada County Reads with a kick-off event celebrating the themes of North Woods. Nevada County CEO Allison Lehman will plant a "memory tree"

in the Fir Tree Arboretum at Condon Park, symbolizing the connection between generations through environmental stewardship. Sponsored by the Nevada County Master Gardeners, this act aligns with the novel's themes. Free copies of the book will be distributed, and all program partners will be invited, including the Nisenan Tribe, who will speak on traditional land stewardship and the impacts of industrialization, mining, and colonization.

For book discussions, NCL will establish a "Nature Book Club" before the NEA Big Read period, featuring titles like *Cast Out of Eden* by Robert Aquinas McNally. This will build momentum for North Woods discussions in March and April 2026. Additionally, all five NCL branches will integrate North Woods into their regular book clubs, exploring themes of time, memory, and human impact on the environment.

Artistic programming will be developed with the Nevada County Arts Council and Uba Seo Art Gallery, owned and operated by the Nisenan Tribe. A local artist from an underrepresented community will be commissioned to design a mural reflecting historical injustices experienced by indigenous and immigrant communities in Nevada County. The project will include community input, with the final mural unveiled in a public event featuring a discussion on its themes.

Three writing workshops will allow patrons to creatively engage with North Woods:

1. Poetry and the Natural World: Led by Nevada County Youth Poet Laureate Joey Henry, this workshop will explore nature-inspired poetry.
2. Storytelling Through Time: Former Nevada County Poet Laureate Molly Fisk will guide participants in crafting multi-generational stories linked to a single place or object.
3. Ecological or Dystopian Futures: Ian Boalt, Adult Services Librarian and zine writer, will lead a speculative writing workshop inspired by North Woods and works by authors like Kim Stanley Robinson and Jeff VanderMeer.

Two major events will further explore the novel's themes. A panel discussion will include members of the Nisenan Tribe, Richard B. Johnson (author of *A History of Us*, which details the experience of the Nisenan), Donn K. Harris of Color Me Human, and Sarah Orton of Yuba Harm Reduction Collective. Panelists will discuss systemic injustices in Nevada County, past and present, fostering conversations on equity and sustainability.

A Nevada City walking tour, co-hosted by representatives from the Nisenan Tribe, Community Asian Theatre of the Sierras (CATS), and the Nevada County Historical Society, will examine the environmental and cultural transformations of the area during the Gold Rush. The tour will highlight the impact of colonization, the displacement of Chinese immigrants, and the environmental devastation caused by mining, providing participants with a deeper understanding of local history and its lasting effects.

The season will conclude with a public author talk featuring Daniel Woods. Previous community read author events with Charles Yu and Ross Gay have drawn large audiences, demonstrating the community's enthusiasm for literary engagement. Hosting Daniel Woods will provide an opportunity for attendees to hear directly from the author about his work and insights.

These events align with the goals of the NEA Big Read by fostering meaningful conversations, celebrating local creativity, amplifying diverse voices, and strengthening community connections. Book

clubs and panel discussions will encourage dialogue on important themes, broadening perspectives and fostering understanding. Walking tours will link literature to local history and culture, creating immersive experiences, while the author visit will provide insight into the creative process.

To assess the success of these programs, NCL will gather participant feedback through surveys, track attendance and engagement levels, and hold reflective discussions. By analyzing these measures, we can ensure that our programs continue to inspire, connect, and elevate voices in our community.

Project partnerships narrative

1. Describe your partnerships with libraries (as applicable) and community organizations. Indicate if these are new partnerships or describe your history of working with these partners.
2. Explain the role each partner will play in your program.

Color Me Human: NCL has a strong standing relationship with Color Me Human, a local 501c3 focused on racial equity and social justice. Donn K. Harris of CMH was a co-interviewer for Charles Yu during 2023's NEA Big Read event. NCL will partner with them in 2026 to explore how the past and the present are affecting the future of social justice within Nevada County.

Cultural Heritage: Indigenous Research Project (CHIRP) and the Nisenan Tribe have been panelists and participants in NCL discussions for many years, sharing the experiences of the local indigenous people of Nevada County. The partnership between NCL and the Nisenan was particularly strong when *The Round House* by Louise Erdrich was selected for NEA Big Read in 2021.

The Nevada County Arts Council is another long-time partner of NCL. During 2024's NEA Big Read program, the Arts Council was instrumental in promoting the author event with Ross Gay and providing the space for it at their annual poetry festival. The Arts Council will be included in selecting an artist for a public mural and their current Nevada County Youth Poet Laureate Joey Henry will be asked to run a writing workshop.

Nevada County Historical Society: The Nevada County Historical Society is a long-time partner who previously with NCL in 2023, when the selection was *Interior Chinatown*. They were pivotal in promoting a highly successful free screening of two short films documenting the plight of Chinese immigrants in the greater Nevada County area. NCL looks forward to partnering with them on the historical walking tour.

Nevada County Superintendent of Schools, Truckee-Tahoe Unified School District, and Nevada Union High School are all long time partners for NCL. The districts will help run a writing contest for high school students related to the themes of *North Woods*, integrate *North Woods* into classroom curriculum, and promote NEA Big Read events to students and their families.

Master Gardeners of Nevada County: The Master Gardeners of Nevada County currently partner with the library to run a Seed Library, which is a free service where people can take packages of seeds for their garden. The Master Gardeners are very concerned with the ecology of Nevada County and will provide a tree to plant during the kick-off party.

Yuba Harm Reduction Collective is a long-term partner who currently provides Narcan for free distribution at NCL branches. YHRC interfaces directly with PWUD and the houseless population of Nevada County. They have a unique sociological perspective on the present struggles for affordable housing in Nevada County which they will share as part of the panel discussion.

Community Asian Theatre of the Sierras (CATS) is a long-time partner who contributed greatly towards 2023's selection of Interior Chinatown. The library supports CATS on a regular basis and promotes CATS plays and their Chinese New Year celebration. CATS members will provide an insightful look into the history of how Chinese immigrants were discriminated against and systematically pushed out of Nevada County in the historical walking tour.

Provide a description of community outreach

1. Describe the community you plan to reach with your programming and explain how you will engage individuals of diverse backgrounds and abilities.
2. Describe how you will make your proposed activities accessible to people with disabilities.

To reach a broad audience, NCL will utilize multiple outreach strategies, including bilingual advertising (in English and Spanish) through digital platforms, community bulletin boards, local newspapers, and radio stations. Partnering with community leaders and organizations will help NCL reach a broader audience and expand the footprint and expectations of community reads programs for the future.

NCL's programming will be designed to reflect the diversity of its community, offering events that resonate with different age groups, cultural backgrounds, and interests. The creative writing workshops will include themes and activities that encourage participants to explore personal and community histories, connecting their stories to the themes of North Woods. These workshops will be open to all skill levels, creating an accessible entry point for anyone interested in participating. The walking tour of Nevada City, co-hosted by the Nisenan Tribe, CATS, and a local historian, will offer an intergenerational learning experience, combining education and reflection on the communities' shared history.

All NEA Big Read programming is designed to highlight the themes of North Woods during a time when marginalized communities are feeling threatened. Nevada County acknowledges its demographic makeup is largely white, and Nevada County Library is dedicated to giving a platform to those in the community who have been discriminated against and persecuted, historically and presently. We hope these kinds of conversations will help to move Nevada County forward towards greater rights, privileges, access, and understanding for our BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and immigrant community members. To make NEA Big Read 2026 fully inclusive, we will take proactive steps to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities. All promotional materials will be available in multiple formats, including large print and digital versions compatible with screen readers. Our events will be held in accessible venues with appropriate accommodations, such as ramps, elevators, and wheelchair seating.

For individuals with hearing impairments, we will provide ASL interpretation at major events, including panel discussions, workshops, and public readings. Closed captioning will be available for any virtual or recorded events. Additionally, we will offer sensory-friendly programming, such as quiet creative spaces for writing workshops and smaller group discussions for individuals who may find large events overwhelming.

Transportation assistance will be provided through partnerships with local transit services, ensuring that individuals with mobility challenges can attend events. By prioritizing accessibility and inclusivity in every aspect of the program, NEA Big Read 2026 will ensure that everyone in our community can participate and feel welcome.

Budget

| Expense Description | Paid by Grant | Paid by Applicant | Paid by 3rd Party | In-kind | Total Match |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Project Staff Salaries | \$0.00 | \$19,815.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$19,815.00 |
| Speaker Fees | \$10,000.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Contractor Fees | \$800.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Book Purchases | \$4,320.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Venue Rental | \$0.00 | \$1,200.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$1,200.00 |
| Speaker Fees | \$1,900.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Speaker Fees | \$0.00 | \$600.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$600.00 |
| Promotional Fees | \$2,900.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Promotional Fees | \$0.00 | \$500.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$500.00 |
| Total Project Expenses: | \$19,920.00 | \$22,115.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$22,115.00 |

Use this space to offer more detail about your budget

Project Staff Salaries include 10 hours for a Librarian III for grant reporting and monitoring; 190 hours for a Librarian I for planning events and marketing materials, purchasing materials, and running events; and 200 hours for a Library Technician to assist the Librarian I with NEA Big Read-related tasks.

Speaker Fees include a \$10,000 author program fee for Daniel Mason (estimated, pending); \$1000 for the author’s hotel stay; \$900 for the author’s flights; and \$600 for the author’s car transport.

Book Purchases are calculated as 400 books at \$10.80 per book, plus tax.

Contractor Fees are for facilitators for two writing workshops at \$400 per workshop.

Venue Rental is for the final event (author talk).

Promotional Fees paid by the grant are for radio promotional advertisements for events in Truckee and western Nevada County, as well as online promotional advertisements on Yubanet.com, a local online news website. Promotional Fees paid by NCL are for print advertising and flyers for events.

Supporting Documentation

Supporting documentation

Upload relevant information. Click Browse Files to get started.

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