

Mendocino County Library

Ukiah, CA

Grant request: \$10,000

Book selection: *Pretty Monsters*

Financial information:

Previous fiscal year expenses: \$3,126,678

Current fiscal year expenses: \$3,582,218

Project information:

Proposed programming start date: 10-01-2018

Proposed programming end date: 11-17-2018

Number of partner organizations: 36

Number of book discussions: 16

Total number of events: 30

Anticipated total participants: 4,000

Please describe your community where programming will take place.

Mendocino County is a large, rugged piece of paradise located in Northern California. It is a county filled with picturesque small towns, coastal villages, rural agricultural communities, Redwood Forests, vineyards, microbreweries and open spaces. Communities are separated by great distances. The Big Read program and events will help bring together this diverse county. Historically we are an area rich in Native American culture, fishing, ranching, logging and a large back to the land movement which defines our cultural makeup today. Currently, we have a strong wine and tourism presence and thriving organic farms. Economically over 20% live below poverty level with a median income of 42,980; population of about 88,000 spread out over 3,878 sq mi this includes 4 cities. The county seat is in Ukiah with a population of 15,882 and 3 cities with populations of less than 10,000. The county consists of 22 census designated places, 35 unincorporated communities and 7 Native American tribes.

Why did you choose this book?

Mendocino County is a diverse community geographically, socioeconomically, and culturally, it was important to select a title that spoke to all residents. Library staff selected six Big Read titles encompassing different themes that exemplified unique characteristics of our County and decided to let the public choose the book. A survey was created and distributed countywide at branches, on our website, through social media and e-mails to county employees to vote on the title they would want to read. The title chosen was *Pretty Monsters* by Kelly Link. This crossover YA/adult story collection resonated with our community who have a passion for the arts, a strong presence in the field of writing, as well as a strong interest in YA books and support for young adults in our libraries. With a touch of fantasy the stories in *Pretty Monsters* appeal to the unconventionality of Mendocino County, an area that welcomes all and serves as a refuge for people who seek an accepting place to call home.

What are your goals for this project?

Mendocino County Library through the Big Read wants to connect and bring together our diverse and disconnected county using the power of words. By bringing our very diverse communities together through programming events, discussions and readings, we hope to truly find connection points with our neighbors. This will be accomplished by providing enriching diverse programming that incorporates bilingual, intergenerational, special needs, adults, teens and children's events. In conjunction with community partners we will go beyond our traditional library programs and create inter-sectionality through arts, outdoor recreation, science based and ethnically inclusive programs that capture the essence of the selected book while tapping into other interests in our community. Through dynamic programming we will encourage people to interact and connect with their neighbors strengthening community bonds.

Organization Description

Describe your organization's history, programming, and achievements.

Located on the rural north coast of California, the Mendocino County Library serves a population of 87,841. The county's first public libraries go back to 1906 with the Ukiah Public Library being started in a second floor room above a store in downtown Ukiah. Pioneers in our communities were determined to make literature available to all without regards to their ability to purchase books. By 1915 Carnegie Libraries were built in Ukiah and Willits with Fort Bragg and Point Arena creating their own libraries. It wasn't until 1964 that the voters approved a property tax to permanently create the Mendocino County Library system. Throughout the years our local libraries have had great support from the communities with specially designated taxes being approved by our residents. However, despite the support, there were many years of difficulty with layoffs and even threats of closures to our branches during recessions.

With the passage of a special library tax in 2011 we are in a position of relative prosperity and have been working on actualizing our maximum service potential! In addition to having the traditional collection of physical materials and online resources, we also offer many exciting programs. Some of our most exciting achievements include a Seed Library at every branch with the free exchange of gardening information as well as vegetable, herb, and flower seeds. Every summer we offer an exciting Summer Reading Program with Live Animal Shows at every branch, and this is one of our most popular programs. We have held three New Book Festivals offering up to 1,000 copies of the most recently published books, fun crafts and live music. Two of our branches have received grants for the Oculus Rift Virtual Reality systems which provide amazing experiences for patrons. The Willits Library has a hugely popular Halloween Carnival; Fort Bragg Library has had NaNoWriMo Write-Ins for several years in a row with the published short novels cataloged and in our collection.

Describe your organization's experience with presenting community-wide programming that demonstrates an ability to conduct a successful NEA Big Read.

The Mendocino County Library is known for its expansive programming that appeals to all members of our community. We provide the community centers throughout our county with diverse programs for all ages including Virtual Reality, author talks, crafts for all ages, Legos, yoga, nature and science based talks. We successfully present several regular ongoing countywide programs, 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten, Seed Libraries, Winter Reading, and Summer Reading Programs at all branches including our Bookmobile.

A recent countywide program that has been hugely successful is our New Book Festival. The New Book Festival is a fun twist that allows us to bring the hottest most popular titles to our residents thus avoiding huge wait lists common to highly requested titles in the catalog. Over 1,000 titles of the latest and most popular books, audio books, DVDs and CDs are available as the branch is open for 3 hours on a day when it's normally closed. The library is set up similarly to a bookstore and multiple copies of all titles are made available for check out. Local musicians provide music for patrons as they browse the items. Refreshments and intergenerational crafts are also provided. Raffle baskets filled with locally themed items from businesses and library vendors helped to provide another layer of fun. The library partners with local musicians, caterers, stores, and restaurants to provide food, and local businesses help provide items for the raffle baskets. The Friends of the Library helps to coordinate volunteers. Local radio stations, newspapers, county website and the Board of Supervisors help to promote the events throughout the County. The New Book Festival is an ongoing countywide program and has currently been held at three of our branches. These three events have resulted in over 800 attendees and over 1,300 items checked out.

Organizer Biographies

Outline the key individuals who will plan and implement the programming, including their titles, anticipated roles and responsibilities in your proposed program, and experience or capacity for managing a NEA Big Read. Include partner organizations' staff as applicable.

Karen Horner is the County Library Director and currently oversees all branch and countywide library programming. Having overseen and initiated numerous programs, Karen will serve as the Programming Contact. Barb Chapman is the Administrative Secretary and has overseen numerous grants for Mendocino Library. Barb maintains all website content and will be creating a Big Read website for our program. Barb has coordinated other countywide events and is the lead in arranging, planning, purchasing, and coordinating all New Book Festivals for our county. Barb will be the Grant Contact for the NEA grant. Nayo Sicard is a Senior Library Technician and has helped to coordinate, market, and purchase items for other countywide events such as New Book Festival. Nayo will help to create and distribute all marketing promotions for Big Read and maintain scheduled events on website. She will be a key member of the Big Read committee.

Dan Hess and Julia Larke are both Branch Librarians and will help to arrange programs along the Mendocino Coast. Nicole Bird, Josh Bennett, and Marna Carney are the Branch Librarians for the inland portion of our county. All will work together and will work closely with community partners to provide intergenerational, bilingual and all-inclusive programs (including working with Native American tribes) that promote the Big Read grant. Kim Doyle, Jannah Minnix, and Benjamin MacBean are Youth Librarians and will help to facilitate family themed programs and storytimes that work with the theme of Link's book; they will also coordinate with regular partners to provide bilingual family programs and storytimes. The children's librarians will also order age-appropriate similar themed books to distribute to children alongside of the Big Read book.

Dave Frick oversees the Bookmobile and provides outreach to rural areas in our county and will distribute books and programs to these areas. David also works with rural and tribal schools and conservation camps to meet needs of underserved members of the community. Melissa Eleftherion Carr is a local author and Teen and Adult Services Librarian and will facilitate a local adult book club group in book talk and discussion. Melissa will also help coordinate programs focused on teens and will host an author talk.

Karen Mattson is the Curator for the Mendocino County Museum. Karen was previously a Curator of Education for Placer County overseeing programs countywide and in six museums. Karen will work closely with our libraries to coordinate an historical exhibit and program in relation to the theme in Link's book along with arranging a book discussion at Museum. Alyssum Weir is the Executive Director of the Arts Council of Mendocino County and will help coordinate countywide art exhibits, contests, and programs that express the theme of Link's book for all ages and abilities.

Aimee McGee is a member of the Writer's Club of Mendocino and the facilitator of NaNoWriMo for our library and will work to coordinate writing programs and author talks. Ruth Sparks is a member of Fort Bragg Rotary, Soroptomist, Friends of Fort Bragg Library, and Community Service Chair for Mendocino Study Club. She was a key player in the Pygmy Forest being designated a National Landmark and will help to coordinate a book talk with Mendocino Study Club and nature hike with National Parks in the Pygmy Forest.

Susan Bradley is the President of the Friends of the Long Valley Library and will coordinate with library to reach Northern Mendocino County residents who are not geographically in close proximity to a physical library. Susan is leading the movement to build a library in Laytonville, a rural area in the Northern part of county. She will assist in providing children's storytime matching Link's theme, helping to get Link's book to local teens and adults and coordinate an intergenerational program in the area.

Programming Description

Describe your programming plans in detail. Provide details on the types of activities, target audiences for those activities, locations, and intended dates. Explain how your activities will engage audiences with your selected book.

Mendocino County Library will kick off the Big Read with events at each of the five branches. These events will be hosted by each branch, include readings from book, themed crafts, refreshments, along with detailed handouts and brochures highlighting all programs scheduled throughout the County. Each kickoff event will be coordinated to reflect their community and will include book discussions to introduce book to the community. Local authors will be invited to attend and lead discussions.

Throughout the proposed dates for the Big Read Grant, every branch library throughout Mendocino County will host book discussions on Kelly Link's *Pretty Monster* Big Read book or similar titles. All book club programs will read and discuss Kelly Link's book, and all storytimes at branches will incorporate similar themed books and programs that tie in the connection of community through reading. Each branch will host 2-3 book discussions at the library with other book discussions planned at other locations in the county. Branch libraries that offer scheduled children and family crafts will continue to offer these programs and crafts will incorporate elements of Link's stories. Fort Bragg Branch Library holds a Fall Art Contest for youth and this year's theme will coordinate with the Big Read program.

The Big Read will be intergenerational. In addition to handing out Big Read books, the library will purchase juvenile books that relate to the theme of Link's book and incorporate a children's version of Big Read. Branches will then host children version of *Pretty Monster* themed events inviting children to dress up, express themselves, and listen to stories and have age appropriate crafts where children can make a pretty monster. The library will coordinate with each community to incorporate bilingual themed storytimes and book discussions that reach Spanish speaking community members.

Local Radio Station KNYO hosts a library hour program, Listen Up! Library Hour with Dennis Dias, and during program dates he will lead a book reading and discussion open to callers joining in via airwaves. This will allow us to reach nontraditional library patrons.

In coordination with the Arts Council of Mendocino County there will be several art exhibits, contests, and programs throughout the county that express the theme of Link's book. Art will be exhibited in libraries, businesses, galleries, and other organizations. This program will connect all ages and abilities to express the shared joy of words through various art forms. The library will also coordinate with the Arts Explorer program which encourages and showcases art from developmentally disabled adults. We will be having workshops on creating art inspired by Link's book or alternate books. In conjunction with National Parks Service we will schedule a guided hike through the Pygmy National Landmark Forest. This program will be for all ages and abilities to discover the mystery and beauty that nature holds as similarly found in the pages of a great book. The library will also coordinate with garden clubs for a speaker to hold a Mushroom themed discussion in conjunction with the fantastical stories of Link's book.

A highlight will be *Pretty Monster* keynote sessions and discussions led by author, playwright, and teacher, Jody Gehrman at multiple locations which will provide members of the community an opportunity to hear from and discuss the stories with an acclaimed author and other community members. On the Coast and Inland Mendocino County there will be poetry readings that celebrate the joy of creating art through the written world in celebration of Link's collection of short stories. Local Native American members will be invited for storytelling programs to showcase sharing and connecting through oral tales. Additionally, Mendocino County Museum will create an exhibit and lead a discussion that incorporates local history and connecting as a community with the shared joy of reading Link's book

Partnerships Description

(a) Describe your partnerships with libraries (as applicable) and community organizations. (b) Explain the role each partner will play in your program, the activities each partner will undertake with your organization, and whether these partnerships are confirmed or pending. (c) Explain how your partnerships will allow you to reach your intended audience(s) and strengthen or build new communities around the NEA Big Read activities.

- Mendocino County Library has approximately 500,000 visitors to all our branches and 47,000 library cardholders with 30,000 people attending library programs in the last year. Every branch has an active and supportive Friends group that assists in promoting and coordinating all library programs. Mendocino County Library regularly partners with local businesses and organizations for programming and for the Big Read will rely on regular partners along with additional partners below.

- Mendocino County will issue a Proclamation declaring the Big Read Program Dates as Big Read Month in Mendocino County during the Board of Supervisors meeting. Events and programs will be highlighted during the CEO report at public meetings and all events and programs will be listed on countywide social media platforms and websites (Confirmed).

- The Mendocino County Museum in conjunction with the library will host a talk and exhibit highlighting the Big Read book in relation to our county history (Confirmed). The Mendocino County Seed Libraries will host gardening and seed events at each of the branches with intergenerational programming (Confirmed).

- The Arts Council of Mendocino County will coordinate countywide art events that will partner with local art artists and venues to showcase themed art based on the Big Read. Activities and displays will happen during the Big Read with various art programs will be for all ages (Confirmed).

- The National Parks Service Natural Landmarks Program of the Pacific West Region will work with the library to coordinate a book discussion and hike at Pygmy Forest National Landmark located along the coast. (Confirmed). Mendocino County Parks will coordinate with other community partners to host a Big Read theme walk and hike at various county parks that will be accessible for all ages and abilities (Confirmed).

- Local high schools throughout county will host visits from library staff to reach out to teens to provide books and coordinate book discussions for teens (Pending). Mendocino College will assist in promoting Big Read events and host a book discussion and author talk (Pending). Mendocino Study Club will host book discussions in collaboration with the private Mendocino Community Library (Confirmed).

- Writers of the Mendocino Coast will host a book discussion and author talk (Pending). Local writers will host various short story writing workshops that coordinate with NaNoWriMo(National Novel Writing Month) at several branches that will be an intergenerational programming connecting the current NaNoWriMo program with Big Read events to encourage art expression through words (Confirmed).

- Flynn Creek Circus is a rural based circus theater group would provide shows in our county that bring intergenerational people together to celebrate art and fantasy (Pending). Noyo Theater and Coast Cinemas will host a showing of a fantasy themed movie that will appeal to all ages and connect visual storytelling with theme of Big Read selection (Pending).

- Safe Passages Family Resource Center will coordinate with the library to host and plan bilingual, family and teen programs (Pending). Parents and Friends is a nonprofit group that works with developmentally disabled adults and will partner to coordinate programs that connect adults and families with disabilities to Big Read programs that can connect them with their community and library (Pending)

- The Friends of Long Valley Library will help to reach communities in the Northern part of the county to host book discussions and disburse books to rural northern areas. They will also provide storytime at local book room with similar theme as selected Big Read book (Confirmed). Lake County Library will partner with us in cross promoting Big Read events if both counties are awarded grants(Confirmed).

Promotional Description

(a) Describe how you will promote your programming. Discuss any proposed or existing partnerships with specific media outlets. (b) Explain how your program will utilize the PDF digital resources found on arts.gov and distribute copies of your reading selection.

The Mendocino County Library will promote our NEA Big Read by reaching out to our rural community in a variety of ways including local radio and movie theater spots, digital communications, print materials, and announcements at local high schools. The Library has a radio spot with local radio station KNYO featuring a program called, Listen up! The Library Hour with Dennis Dias. Other local radio stations will be invited to promote Big Read events as well. Video spots will be featured at several movie theaters as well as on our website.

The hub of our online promotions will be our NEA Big Read web pages which will feature events and provide information such as book and author information, discussion ideas, and links and logos of our partners. An event calendar will list details about intergenerational events, as well as programs for adult, YA, and children. Promotional materials will be created for social media including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, and eNewsletters. We will cross-promote with our neighboring county libraries by having links to each other's Big Read websites. The Bookmobile will provide a mobile hotspot so that our rural community members can access our website.

We will have a variety of print materials including fliers, posters, newsletters, bookmarks, and palm-cards which will be distributed by our libraries, the Bookmobile, and our community partners. We will also advertise on the MTA (Mendocino Transit Authority) buses which have routes throughout 2,800 square miles of Mendocino County. We will have a large display in the downtown County Courthouse on the main floor. We plan to purchase 750 copies of *Pretty Monsters* to distribute at our five library branches and the Bookmobile. Copies of the book will be distributed to retirement and assisted living communities during our routine visits. Every free copy of the book will come with a bookmark/palm-card detailing the dates of all our programs and book discussions.



Promoting the arts and cultivating creativity to benefit and enrich the lives of residents and visitors

January 11, 2018

NEA Big Read Review Panel
National Endowment for the Arts
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20506

Dear NEA Big Read Review Panel:

I am writing to express the Arts Council of Mendocino County's strong support for Mendocino County Library's Big Read grant application. Should the NEA fund this grant, we intend to partner with the library on arts programming to deepen and expand connections to the book selected by the community, and to deepen connections to literature and story telling. In a rural county such as ours, grants such as these are tremendously impactful.

Through this grant, Mendocino County Library intends to have county-wide programs that tie into the theme of the sponsored book, book discussions and art programs. The Arts Council of Mendocino County looks forward to working together with the Mendocino County Library to do art focused programs that tie into the book that incorporates the rich creative and artistic communities we have throughout our county. Our residents are hungry for opportunities to connect through the arts and storytelling.

I am consistently impressed with the diversity and richness of the Mendocino County Library's programming. Our library is many things to many people, but perhaps most significantly, it is a safe place to learn and connect with people and ideas. I have great faith and confidence in the creativity and relevance of our library and this grant has the potential to really fuel and expand that creativity of programming and library relevance within the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alyssum Wier".

Alyssum Wier
Executive Director



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

Executive Office

CARMEL J. ANGELO
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
CLERK OF THE BOARD

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January 23, 2018

NEA Big Read Review Panel
National Endowment of the Arts
Arts Midwest
2908 Hennepin Ave., Ste. 200
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Re: National Endowment for the Arts Big Read Grant

Dear NEA Big Read Review Panel:

It is my pleasure and honor to include this letter of support with the Mendocino County Library's application for a National Endowment for the Arts Big Read Grant.

Receiving a Big Read grant this year will help Mendocino County broaden our understanding and connection with our community through shared interaction of reading the same book. The grant will allow the Library to purchase the selected title for people throughout our County to read as well as invite authors to speak at our local Library branches. Further, the grant will enable Library staff to focus on programs over a course of selected weeks that tie into the Big Read through community partners. An example of this type of programming will be a partnership with the Arts Council of Mendocino that will help create a County-wide art showcase with a theme of the selected book. A second idea is to do a walk-through of the Pygmy Forest on our local Mendocino Coast with an expert leading the walk as a fantasy forest, which is the setting of one of the stories in the selected book. Any funding awarded to us will be used for the purchase of books and fees for speakers to join us.

Further, if awarded this grant, the Library will request the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors proclaim October, 2018, as "Mendocino County Big Read Month."

I am very appreciative of the Mendocino County Library for its commitment to providing county-wide programs to our residents. Receiving the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read Grant will only help connect our community through the shared joy of reading.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carmel J. Angelo".

Carmel J. Angelo, Chief Executive Officer
County of Mendocino