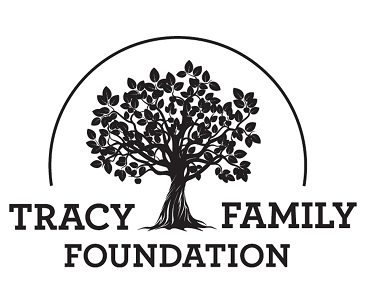
[Skip to main content](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/ao_application.review_app?x_gm_id=1474&x_source_flag=&x_style_id=19018&x_org_id=1719144&x_req_id=96058657&x_proposal_type_id=509#cgcontent)



Your Submitted Applications

The application you previously submitted appears below. No further changes may be made to this application. Click here to [return to the Welcome page](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/ao_login.home?x_gm_id=1474&x_source_flag=&x_proposal_type_id=509&x_invitation_id=&x_org_id=1719144&x_style_id=19018).

Organization

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **\***Organization/School Legal Name | Four Star Public Library District |
| **\***Address | 132 W. South Street, P.O. Box 169 |
| **\***City | Mendon |
| **\***State | Illinois |
| **\***Zip | 62351 |
| **\***County | Adams - IL |
| **\***Telephone | 2179362131 |
| **\***E-mail Address | fourstarpld@gmail.com |
| **\***Type of Organization | Unit of Government |
| Unit of Government Verification | * [Tax Exempt form.pdf (198.06 K), uploaded by Jill Lucey on 2018-02-20](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/upload.get_file?x_gm_id=1474&x_ut=GS_USER_ID&x_value_id=39312789&x_custom_field_id=215092&x_key=1719144&x_parent_table_name=organization) * [Tax Exemption 2025-2030.pdf (23.74 K), uploaded by Valerie Simmons on 2025-02-19](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/upload.get_file?x_gm_id=1474&x_ut=GS_USER_ID&x_value_id=99967953&x_custom_field_id=215092&x_key=1719144&x_parent_table_name=organization) |
| **\***Name of Executive Director/President/CEO | Valerie Simmons / Peggy Muegge |
| **\***Organization Mission Statement or Organization Purpose | To provide an access point for all persons to the world of information. To make available the resources needed to fill the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the individuals and groups of the Four Star Public Library District while promoting the right to access knowledge through expansion and cooperation with other libraries. |
| **\***Year Founded (YYYY) | 1990 |
| **\***Programs Offered | Currently we offer weekly story hour programs, educational programs for adults, LEGO Club, Book Club and a summer reading program for all ages. We also offer one-on-one technology assistance for all ages. Ongoing passive (drop-in) Makerspace programs have been added in the past couple years. |

Contacts

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **\***Contact First Name | Valerie |
| **\***Contact Last Name | Simmons |
| **\***Contact Title | Director |
| **\***Contact Address | 132 W. South Street, P.O. Box 169 |
| **\***Contact City | Mendon |
| Contact State | Illinois |
| **\***Contact Zip | 62351 |
| **\***Contact Telephone | 2179362131 |
| **\***Contact E-mail Address | fourstarpld@gmail.com |

Request

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **\***Project Title | Increasing Early Literacy Circulation and Attendance through Attractive Displays |
| **\***Request Amount | $5,000.00 |
| **\***Total Project or Program Budget | $5,000.00 |
| **\***Funds are being requested for: | Existing Program Support |
| Focus of Education Grant Request | A Growth Mindset |
| **\***Target Population Served by Request | Library patrons in Four Star Public Library District, specifically birth-grade 5. |
| **\***Project Start Date | 7/1/2024 |
| **\***Project End Date | 6/30/2025 |
| **\***Request Information | We are requesting $5,000 for the purchase of new display cases for our summer reading prizes and other early literacy themed book displays to highlight our collection to patrons of our library district. |
| **\***Need for Project | Our library is located in a rural area that covers 220 square miles of mostly farmland. Our population is 4,337 and 38% of the students in our school district qualify for free or reduced lunch. Early literacy programming targeting elementary students and their literacy growth are needed, as only 25.8% of elementary students in our district met the Illinois Assessment of Readiness standards in English Language Arts in 2024. This is down 3 percentage points from 2023, and well below the state standard of 39.4%. When broken out specifically, elementary students in our library district who are considered low income consistently underperform their non-low income counterparts. That achievement gap exploded during and after COVID and was 16 points last year.  We are requesting $5,000 for new early literacy display cases to highlight the high quality summer reading program prizes we have to offer each year. We hope to drive summer reading participation by having a location to house the prizes we invest in. Also, we currently have no place to house themed book displays, except for on top of our shelving. We hope to drive early literacy circulation by having a location to house these displays, as well. By doing so, we can provide our young patrons with an easy access point to curated, timely collections and bundles they can check-out. Since the 1970's, research librarians have regularly noted through observation and circulation statistics that a patron is up to 3 times more likely to check-out a book when it has an attractive cover and/or display.  By creating organized, dedicated spaces, we can better present resources aligned with current trends and community interests. This improved presentation will foster discovery, increase program attendance, and create a welcoming environment where patrons feel encouraged to explore library offerings. |
| **\***Best Practices | Studies in library science indicate that well-designed displays can significantly influence patron behavior. Research shows that books with attractive covers and well-placed displays can increase check-out rates. The entire sub-field of visual merchandising research highlights the importance of visual presentation in promoting circulation. Grete (2018) finds the use of colorful backdrops, varied heights, and thematic decorations to create visually appealing displays to be powerful in promoting patron experiences. Additionally, Dubin (2019) found that seasonal themes or rotating topics engaged patrons and encouraged repeat visits.  Investing in attractive early literacy display cases should significantly enhance the visibility and accessibility of our library's offerings. |
| Collaboration |  |
| **\***How Does This Request Fit Into Your Organization's Mission and Purpose? | Investing in early literacy display cases directly supports the mission of the Four Star Public Library, which is to enrich lives, inspire curiosity, and promote lifelong learning by providing access to knowledge, resources, and opportunities for the entire community. Early literacy is a cornerstone of lifelong learning, and creating a visually engaging, organized environment for young patrons encourages their engagement with books and reading programs.  By housing summer reading program prizes and themed book displays in dedicated, attractive cases, the library fosters an inviting atmosphere that makes literacy resources accessible and exciting for children. This aligns with the library's goal of inspiring curiosity and supporting educational growth. Additionally, providing curated, timely collections helps ensure that children have access to materials tailored to their interests and developmental needs, reinforcing the library's commitment to meeting the community where they are and addressing gaps in literacy.  The cases also support equity in access. In a district where 38% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch and only 25.8% of elementary students met state English Language Arts standards in 2024, these displays provide a valuable opportunity to bridge the achievement gap for low-income families, who may have fewer literacy resources at home. Highlighting books and prizes in a prominent, visually engaging way can motivate young readers to participate in programs, explore new topics, and develop essential skills.  By enhancing visibility, organization, and access, these display cases empower the library to fulfill its mission. They will help create an inclusive and engaging space where all children can grow their love of reading and learning, fostering a stronger, more literate community. |
| **\***SWOT Analysis of Organization or Project  Strengths (S) - What do you do very well?(?)  Weaknesses (W) - What do you need to improve?(?)  Opportunities (O) - Where do you see opportunities for impact?(?)  Threats (T) - Where do you see obstacles to your goals?(?)  We have a community-centered mission, dedicated staff, an increasing community presence, established programs, with strong community ties.  We have limited funding, and outdated physical collection displays.  We have the opportunity to make a large impact on early literacy in the area and strengthen community ties by increasing post-COVID early literacy program participation.  Threats include a large service area limiting participation. As well as family/school/athletic/work commitment deprioritizing library participation. | |
| **\***Did you complete the SWOT Analysis for your organization as a whole or only for a specific project and/or program within your organization? | Project/Program |
| **\***Goals and Action Plan for Measurable Impact  Goal - What do you want to accomplish? What do you want to achieve?(?)  Current Situation - What are you doing now? What does your current data show?(?)  Action Steps to Achieve Goal - What do you plan to do to move from your current situation to your goal?(?)  Measurable Impact Desired - How will you know that you achieved your goal?(?)  Increase early literacy circulation  Currently, we have nowhere to house our summer reading prizes or resourced aligned to current trends and community interest.  We plan to purchase 2 mobile display cases, and have a custom-built board book display case made to make browsing and engaging with early literacy items easier and more enjoyable  Outcomes will include monitoring if board book circulation and early reader circulation increases. We will also collect feedback from patrons on the new displays.  Increase early literacy program attendance  Currently, our early literacy calendar/Rubber Ducky program is not well attended, despite the need. One contributing factor is that our early literacy section is not always easy to navigate and motivating incentives are not well displayed.  We plan to purchase the newest calendar year of early literacy calendar programming created by the ALA and house prizes for the program and books for the program more vibrantly and in an easier way for patrons to engage with them.  Outcomes will include an increase in Rubber Ducky Club participation and other early literacy programming attendance. | |
| **\***Future Funding Plan | We will utilize all $5,000 to purchase the new displays and early literacy programming items (calendars, puppet displays, art smocks). Once purchased, we have the capacity to install the displays and provide staff with expertise to create curated displays. We have the items for this project (prizes, books, existing programs), we are lacking the funds to purchase the high-priced items we need to house the project. |
| **\***Capacity Building | Over the past year, the most impactful capacity-building effort at the Four Star Public Library has been our focus on professional development and strategic planning to better address community needs, particularly in early literacy. Recognizing the critical role our library plays in bridging educational gaps in a rural area, staff have participated in workshops and training sessions focused on literacy programming, community engagement, and innovative library practices. Technology upgrades have also contributed to capacity building. Staff development on utilizing data tracking tools have allowed us to evaluate program attendance and resource circulation more effectively, enabling data-driven decisions about future initiatives. These capacity-building efforts have equipped our team with the knowledge, tools, and strategic direction to better serve our patrons, particularly young readers, while fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. |
| Project Photos |  |
| **\***Executive Director/President/CEO Authorization | Yes |
| **\***Does Your Organization Have a Strategic Plan? | Yes |
| Strategic Plan Upload | * [Long-Range Strategic Plan.docx (156.67 K), uploaded by Valerie Simmons on 2024-11-22](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/upload.get_file?x_gm_id=1474&x_ut=GS_USER_ID&x_value_id=98038841&x_custom_field_id=2238006&x_key=96058657&x_parent_table_name=request) |
| **\***Project Budget Template | * [Final\_Report\_Budget\_Template (2).xls (112 K), uploaded by Valerie Simmons on 2024-11-22](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/upload.get_file?x_gm_id=1474&x_ut=GS_USER_ID&x_value_id=98039379&x_custom_field_id=16847&x_key=96058657&x_parent_table_name=request) |
| **\***Current Annual Organization Budget | $185,590.45 |
| **\***Organization Budget | * [FSTAR 2024-2025 Budget.pdf (124.92 K), uploaded by Valerie Simmons on 2024-11-22](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/upload.get_file?x_gm_id=1474&x_ut=GS_USER_ID&x_value_id=98039787&x_custom_field_id=86712&x_key=96058657&x_parent_table_name=request) * [FSTARBA\_2023.pdf (35.19 K), uploaded by Valerie Simmons on 2024-11-22](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/upload.get_file?x_gm_id=1474&x_ut=GS_USER_ID&x_value_id=98039795&x_custom_field_id=86712&x_key=96058657&x_parent_table_name=request) |
| Statement of Financial Condition |  |
| Statement of Activities |  |
| **\***Do you have any overdue Final Impact Reports to TFF? | No |

Current Year

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **\***Key Staff Member Information | Valerie Simmons, Director  Ashley Davis, Program Coordinator |
| **\***Organizational or Personnel Changes | Jill Lucey, Director, retired in September 2024 and Valerie Simmons was hired. |
| **\***Board of Directors | * [Board of Directors.docx (43.49 K), uploaded by Valerie Simmons on 2024-11-22](https://www.cybergrants.com/pls/cybergrants/upload.get_file?x_gm_id=1474&x_ut=GS_USER_ID&x_value_id=98040161&x_custom_field_id=7994&x_key=96058657&x_parent_table_name=request) |
| Audit |  |
| 990 |  |
| **\***Letter of Agreement - Review and Accept Terms | I ACCEPT |
| **\***Name of Individual Agreeing to Terms | Valerie Simmons |
| **\***How long did it take you to complete this grant application? | 1-5 hours |
| Please share any suggested improvements to our grant application process. | Have a list of documents you'll need to submit at the beginning so you can collect those and have them ready. I was searching all over my computer and office to find forms. |

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