

Passport Packs: Check Out the World

Final Report - Ideas to Action 2025

By Kate Davis, Prairie Lakes Library System, October 2026

Number of people involved in or impacted by the project since Ideas to Action funding:

150

Do you anticipate that your project will continue after Ideas to Action funding?

Yes. The Passport Packs are circulating kits, so they will be living in the wild for the foreseeable future. I also continue to create new packs. I am leading a session at the 2026 WLA conference and doing a lightning talk for the Monarch Library System.

Did your project encourage partnerships and collaborations with any community partners or other WiLS members? Who did you connect with during this process and how might you sustain those connections?

I've connected with PAMANA (Filippino organization), Swedish Linde Lodge #492, Loud Wisconsin Arts, a native-born South African, and a native-born Cameroonian.

Thinking about your project, what was the most innovative part? What can you, or your community, do now that it couldn't before?

The most innovative part of the Passport Packs is that they bring world cultures to children and their families where they are at. Children learn best through hands-on experiences, stories that resonate, and bridges that connect them to kids just like them in other places. Because these circulating kits have been carefully curated and vetted through members of the specific culture, children are able to learn from accurate, authentic, and respectful materials.

How do you think other WiLS members could use what you learned and accomplished at their own organizations?

I hope to inspire other library staff and WiLS members to cultivate cultural relationships and create their own circulating kits. I'm providing scripts to help them start conversations as well as guidelines in how, where, and what to purchase.

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your Ideas to Action project?

My WiLS Idea to Action grant timeline is coming to a close, but the Passport Packs it funded are very much active. Five Passport Pack suitcases live at Milton Public Library in Milton, WI, though they're rarely on the shelves. The kits, which highlight Japan, Sweden, Australia, the Philippines, and India, circulate constantly. Librarians report that families love them and are asking for more! Thanks to the grant, I can continue to create new kits, inspire other librarians to build their own, and collaborate with them to make these resources accessible to all.

Each pack is curated for ages 5-12 and contains several books and a variety of hands-on items, such as games, puzzles, instruments, flags, and culture cards, all designed to highlight the similarities and differences among countries around the world. I knew I would learn as much about each country as our patrons would, but I didn't expect how much of what I already knew in theory would become real in practice.

For example, I originally planned to buy items made in each featured country. I assumed that in a place where nearly anything can be ordered online, sourcing them would be easy, but many items simply weren't available. Children's books are often published at a much lower rate abroad than in the US, so choices were extremely limited. Toys are frequently made from what children find in nature or around their homes, and purchased toys are rare and more likely to be imported from America than the other way around. Occasionally I stumbled upon the perfect item, but US purchasing was unavailable or the shipping cost was astronomical.

Ultimately, I learned to think beyond the cultural boundaries I'd put around myself and found respectful, cost-effective options. This was a perfect fit for the project, since I wanted other libraries to be able to replicate the kits easily. To further help facilitate this, I created a toolkit to guide them in making their own kits. It includes where to find cultural partners, scripts for starting conversations with them, research notes, itemized kit contents, sourcing notes, and cost breakdowns.

Passport Packs are a creative and holistic way to help children and their families celebrate the richness of world cultures, embrace curiosity, develop empathy, and become global citizens – all goals of public libraries. To inspire other statewide librarians to create their own Passport Packs and build excitement for the possibilities that can come of such a unique idea, I gave a talk at the 2026 WLA Conference and am leading webinars with various library systems. Enthusiasm is high and people are already reaching out for guidance on building their own kits.

Feel free to download the toolkit here. You can also look at each of the kits available in the Prairie Lakes Library System–Japan, India, Australia, Sweden, and the Philippines–here. Germany and Mexico are coming soon! Please reach out to me with any questions and if you're willing to share your own Passport Packs plans for other libraries to replicate.

This has been an amazing experience that has helped me develop professional relationships, work outside my comfort zone, and learn how to be a global citizen, just as the Passport Packs aim to do.

Project product(s):

Passport Packs: Check Out the World (project website) - Passport Packs for Sweden, Australia, The Philippines, India, and Japan - South Africa is coming soon!

Passport Packs Project Management Guide - Google Sheet containing separate tabs with resource lists, Wisconsin cultural organizations, scripts for initial contacts and conversations, and details on individual Passport Packs.



