



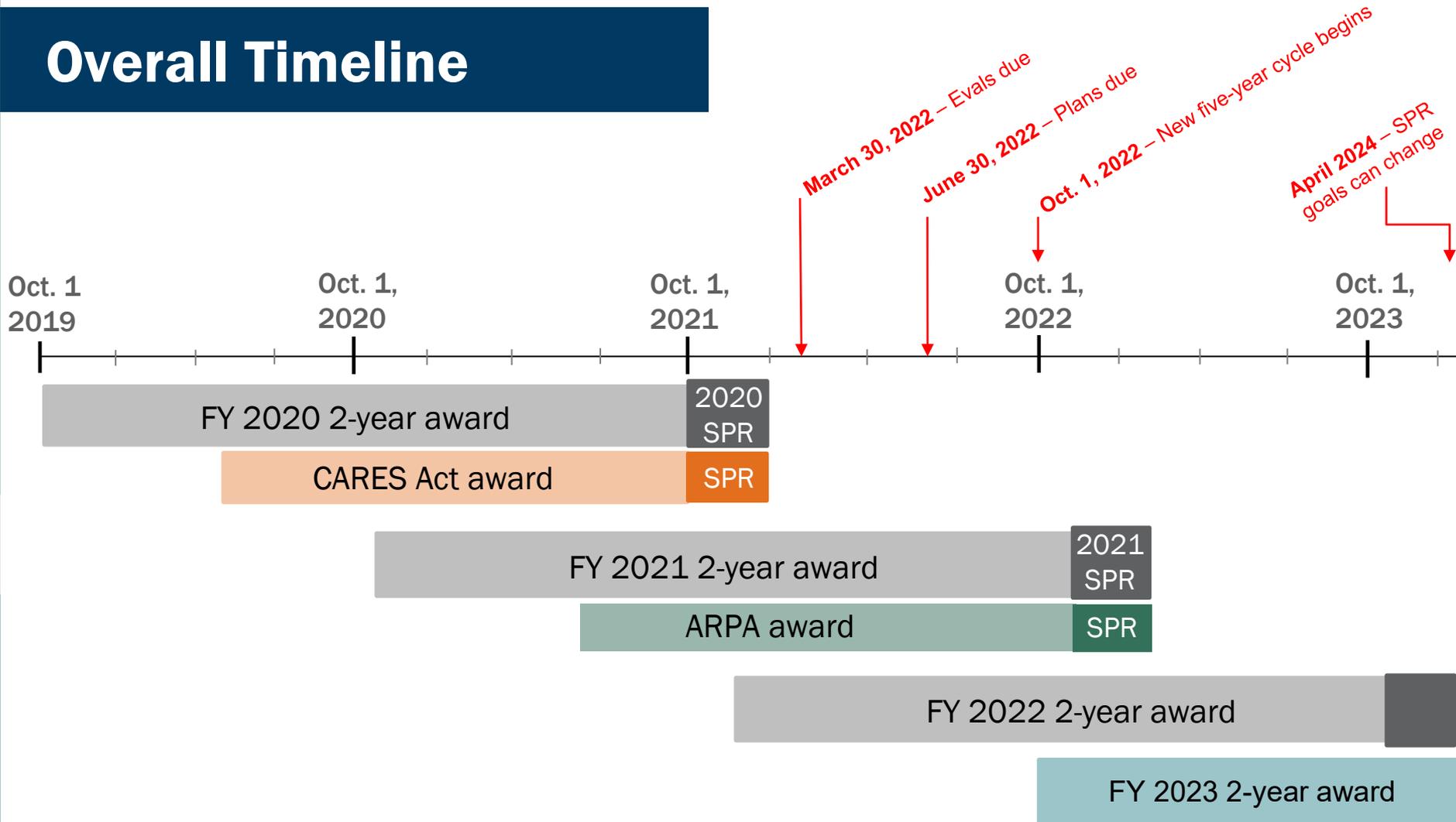
Travelogue: Preparing for the 2018-2022 Five-Year Evaluation

Dennis Nangle



March 30, 2021

Overall Timeline





Federal Statute and the Evaluation

- U.S.C. 20 Sec. 9134 – brief mention of evaluation

(c) Evaluation and report

Each State library administrative agency receiving a grant under this subchapter shall independently evaluate, and report to the Director regarding, the activities assisted under this subchapter, prior to the end of the 5-year plan.

- Note: the SLAA “shall independently evaluate...”
- Because the timeframe is “prior to the end of the 5-year plan,” it sets the 3-year timeframe for the evaluation (2018, 2019, 2020).

Guidelines – Evaluation

- See: [Five-Year Evaluation Guidelines in the G2S Manual](#)
- Do not include CARES Act funds/activities as part of the formal evaluation



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GUIDELINES FOR IMLS GRANTS TO STATES FIVE-YEAR EVALUATION

Purpose of the Evaluation

Section 9134 (c) of IMLS' authorizing legislation directs State Library Administrative Agencies (SLAAs) to "independently evaluate, and report to the Director regarding, the activities assisted under this subchapter, prior to the end of the 5-year plan." This evaluation provides SLAAs an opportunity to measure progress in meeting the goals set in their approved Five-Year Plans with a framework to synthesize information across all state reports in telling a national story.

This guidance identifies a core set of questions for the SLAAs to use in conducting the 2018-2022 Five-Year Evaluations that:

- Highlight effective past practices;
- Assess the efficacy in implementing the activities used in advancing state goals; and
- Develop key findings and recommendations from evaluating the past five years for use in organizing the next Five-Year Plan.

There are three sets of questions for each SLAA. The guidance contains possible methodological choices to help each SLAA best work with an independent evaluator.

Format and Questions

IMLS analyzes and makes public all SLAA Five-Year Evaluations. In order to do this effectively, certain information needs to be included in all evaluation reports. This is particularly important in enabling IMLS to tell federal policy makers and practitioners about what has happened at a national level. The specified format is intended to ease the burden for any party to review across multiple reports.

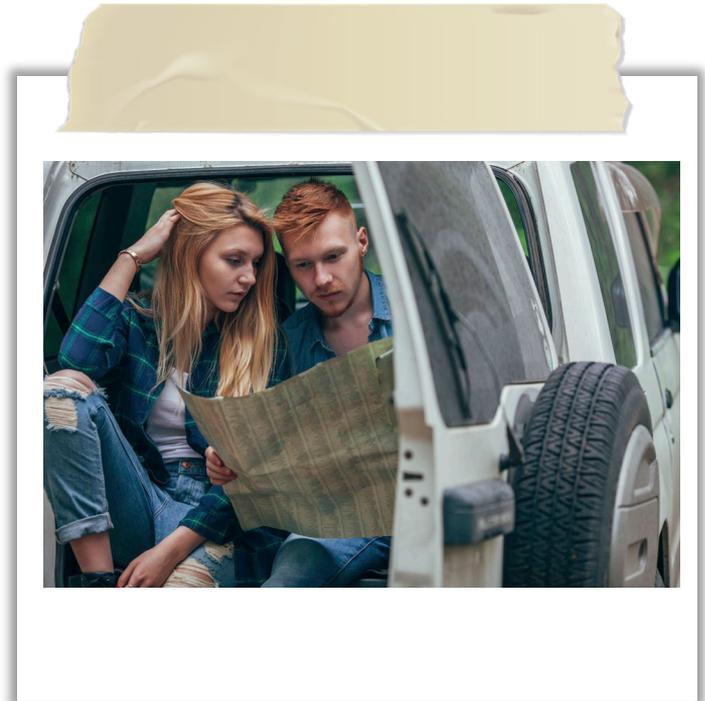
Documents **required** for the Five-Year Evaluation include a cover page (1 page), evaluation summary (2-5 pages), evaluation report (25 pages, max.), and appendices. Please follow the format specified below:

Cover Page (1 page)

- State Library Administrative Agency
- Title of the evaluation
- Evaluator(s) name and organizational affiliation
- Date
- Name of the team, branch, unit, or person commissioning the evaluation

IMLS Review of Evaluations

- For evaluations, IMLS “accepts” them, rather than “grading” them
- G2S Program Officers have 90 days (April-June, 2022) to finish reviewing all five-year evaluations
- IMLS will send official letters of acceptance





Paying for the Evaluations/Plans

- See: https://imls.gov/sites/default/files/administrativecosts_feb2015.pdf
- Can be either LSTA project funds, admin funds, or state funds
- Consistency is key: if your evaluation will be funded differently this cycle than in the past, please contact your Program Officer

Five-Year Plan and Five-Year Evaluation.

The Five-Year Plan and Five-Year Evaluation are periodic expenses that are statutorily mandated under 20 U.S.C. 9101 *et seq.* While these can be viewed as ordinary administrative costs covered by the 4% restriction, they can also be viewed as extraordinary costs, not usually associated with grants management. As a result, IMLS will accept these projects costs as either part of the 4% administrative costs or as part of the 96% program costs. The determination will be made by the SLAA and **must be handled in a consistent manner**. Whichever approach the State determines will decide how these projects will be reported in the State Program Report (SPR).

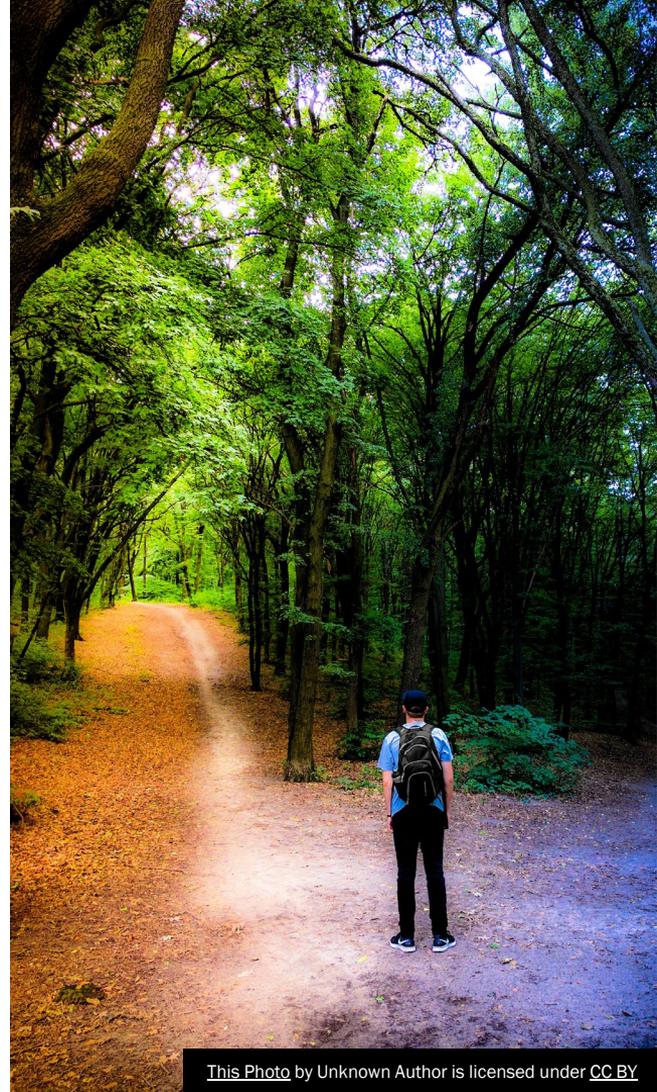


Preparing for the Five-Year Evaluation

Matt Birnbaum, Supervisory Social Scientist

Overview

- Framing the Five-Year Evaluation Framework
- Key Evaluation Concerns
- Guidelines
- Next Steps
- Q&A





Framing the Evaluation Strategy

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Guiding Principles for Measuring Success



- Foci
 - Greater transparency and sharing of data
 - Better accountability
 - Improved program improvement
- Balancing national-level needs with SLAA-level needs
- Cooperative process between SLAAs and IMLS



Evaluation Terminology

Evaluation: systematic thinking about a program, raising meaningful questions, gathering and assessing evidence to provide answers, and applying all to strengthen a program (Russ-Eft and Preskill, 2009).

Implementation: the process for administering any activity or strategy.

Evaluation methodology: a set of qualitative or quantitative research methods used in an evaluation.

Process evaluation: evaluation for assessing efficacy of implementation.

Impact evaluation: evaluation for assessing net results.

5-Year Evaluation Objectives

- Comply with 20 U.S.C. § 9134(c) for *independently evaluating and reporting* of what happened during prior 5-year plan.
 - Enable SLAA assessments at state/territory level to parallel an IMLS assessment at national level:
 - Take advantage of strengths of SPR data
 - Highlight effective past practices (“Retrospective Questions”)
 - Examine processes for implementing grantmaking within each SLAA (“Process Questions”)

COVID Caveats

- Exclude CARES Act funds in the formal evaluation
- However, account for COVID-19 related disruptions
- How to do this:
 - Do not report on either CARES Act or ARPA Act funds as part of the 5-year evaluation
 - If you do, separate CARES Act from FY 2020 annual allotments
 - Focus on how the pandemic might influence the next 5-year plans.
- Stay tuned: IMLS plans for evaluating CARES Act and ARPA Act funds



Key Evaluation Concerns

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Independent Evaluations

IMLS Authorization requires “independent” evaluations.

- Independent evaluations are objective (carried out free from outside influence).
- They can be done in-house if those conducting the evaluations are not directly reportable to those with managerial responsibilities for LSTA-funded services.

Ensure the evaluation and evaluators are useful to your key stakeholders.

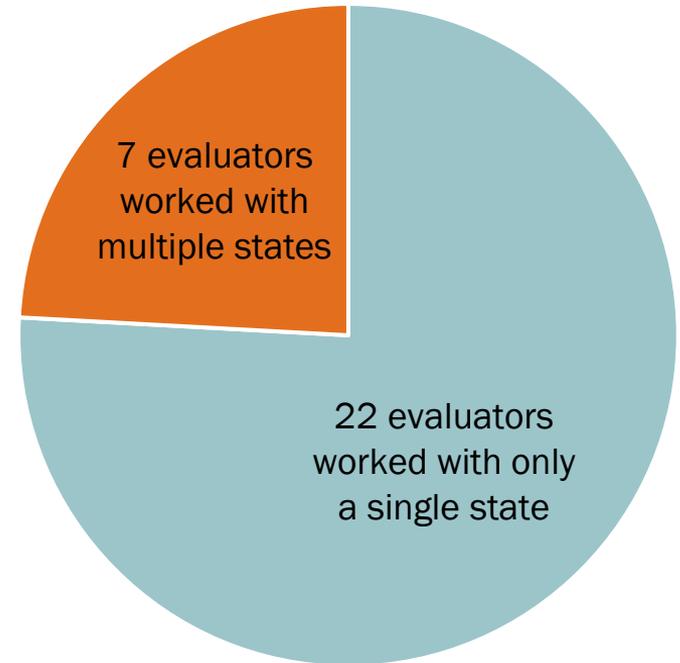
For further assistance:

- American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles, [American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators \(Guiding Principles \(eval.org\)\)](https://www.eval.org/guiding-principles)
- New Evaluator Community of Practice

Last Cycle (2013-2017)

- There were 29 total evaluators (5 with some degree of overlap under different affiliations)
- Only 1 evaluator was in-house, the rest were third party
- One evaluator worked with 20 states, other evaluators worked with 1, 2 or 3 states
- Most (22 or 76% of) evaluators worked with a single state

Evaluators with Single or Multiple States





One Consumer Tip: Choosing an Evaluator

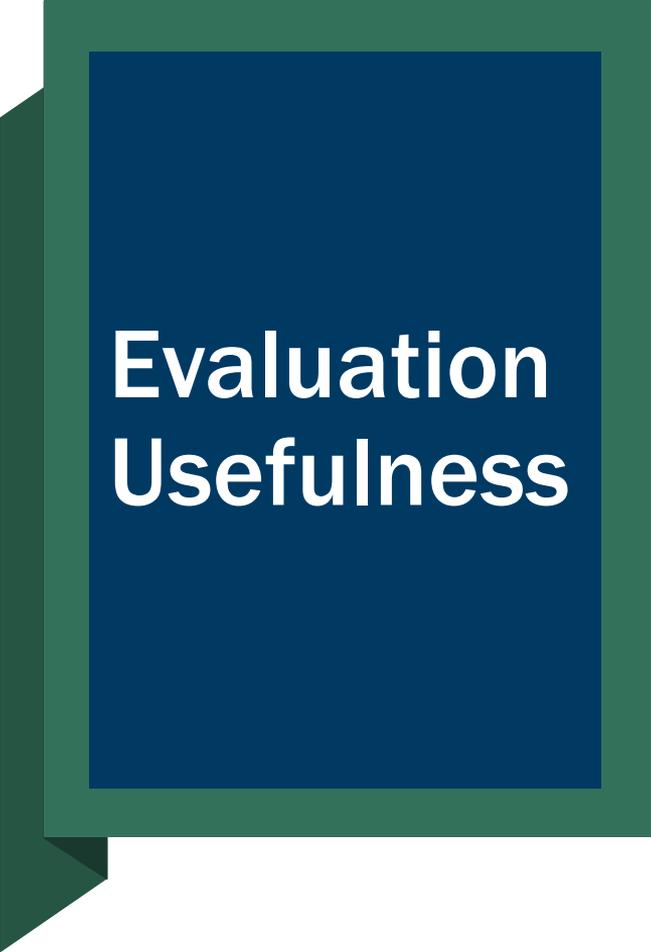
Guiding Principle: Balance Scientific Objectivity
with Stakeholder Trust

Independence  Credibility

Organizational/environment understanding

Adaptability/transferability

Costs and manageability



Evaluation Usefulness

- Effective Uses for 5-Year SLAA Evaluations
 - Demonstrating accountability with federal law
 - Informing next SLAA 5-year plans
 - Identifying and sharing promising practices
 - Strengthening relationships with key stakeholders
- Varying uses for key stakeholders
- Ethical caveats:
 - Don't misuse evaluation for pushing a self-interest
 - Maintain objectivity: An answer of No is as useful as an answer of YES
 - Be prepared to deal with negative findings

Varying Stakeholder Uses

1

Stakeholders can play different roles in an evaluation

- Respondents
- Subject matter experts
- Advocates
- Policymakers
- Implementers
- Partners
- Beneficiaries

2

Stakeholders can be involved at different points in time in the evaluation process:

- Planning
- Implementation
- Dissemination
- Adaptation

3

Plan for how stakeholders can **use** the evaluation and not just what must get done



Evaluation Methodology



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Multiple Sources of Data for the Evaluation

State Program Report (SPR) data

Other administrative records:

- Strategic and other plans
- Budgets
- Memos
- Legislation, administrative rule changes
- Correspondence

Published evaluations and other studies (e.g., audits)

Media (e.g., newspaper stories, PSAs, etc.)

Interviews and Focus Groups

Surveys

Photos/videos

Multiple Methods for Data Analysis



Statistical Analyses

Descriptive statistics
(e.g., means, quartiles,
distributions)
Inferential statistics



Qualitative Analyses

Coding
“Content analysis”
“Exemplars”



Other Analyses

Case studies
GIS
Social networks



Mixed methods analyses

Last Cycle Data: Methods

- All states' evaluators used document review
- Most evaluators used a combination of surveys, interviews, and focus groups
- Evaluators' methodological descriptions varied greatly
 - Focus groups were sometimes "virtual"
 - Notation of data sources sometimes missing

Number of States' Evaluations Reporting Each Method



**Other included:*

- Social media, websites, newspaper articles, fliers (5 states used a combination of these);
- Qualitative analysis – one state used Atlas Ti of the state's LSTA grants, another used hand-coding of applications and annual reports for FY 2013-2015;
- Project Outcome data (1 state);
- 10 years of Public Libraries Survey (PLS) data (1 state)

Consumer Tip: Evaluation Methodological Strategies

- Let the type of question direct the type of method to use.
 - Some questions are best answered with only quantitative methods
 - Some questions are best answered with only qualitative methods
 - Many questions are best answered by mixing a combination of methods (e.g., case studies)

More Consumer Tips

- **Develop a good evaluation plan before the evaluation starts.**
 - *Ask the important questions before acting on answers*
 - *Consider which stakeholders care about which questions*
- **Ensure evaluators are up front about selected methods and other choices.**
 - *Cardinal rule: another evaluator should be able to copy the protocols followed, execute them, and obtain the same results*
- **Balance your agency needs with those of other stakeholders.**
 - *Let larger public interest drive resolution to any conflicts*
- **Use results-based management principles in working with the evaluators.**
 - *Don't micromanage – set up key deliverables and interact with evaluators around the milestones.*



Guidelines

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Framing the evaluations

- Retrospective questions
- Process questions
- Evaluation methodology
- Independent evaluator requirement



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https://imls.gov/sites/default/files/2018-2022_fiveyearevaluationguidelines.pdf

Retrospective Question 1

- To what extent did an SLAA Five-Year Plan's activities make progress towards each goal?

Organize findings around each goal.

Categorize goals as either achieved, partly achieved or not achieved.

Identify key factors (e.g., budget) associated with goals that were not achieved.

Last Cycle Data: Goals

- Out of 221 goals across all states, the majority (132 or 60%) were categorized as Achieved
- 23 states categorized all goals as Achieved
- 12 states categorized all goals as Partly Achieved
- 21 states categorized goals with a mix of indicators

Goal Categorization



■ Achieved ■ Partly Achieved ■ Not Achieved



Judging the evidence: Achieved/ Partly Achieved/Not Achieved

- Possible factors for Partly Achieved/Not Achieved:
 - underway but needs more time
 - unexpected things that arose
 - things that needed to pivot
 - things that went great and could be scaled up
 - things that could be extended to new audiences
 - changing the type of delivery to the same audience
 - Etc. [“e.g., staffing, budget, overambitious goals, partners”]



Retrospective Question 2

Question

- To what extent did an SLAA Five Year Plan's activities achieve results that addressed national priorities associated with Measuring Success focal areas and their corresponding intents?

Focal Areas and Intents

- Institutional Capacity (3 intents)
- Information Access (2 intents)
- Lifelong Learning (2 intents)
- Human Services (3 intents)
- Employment & Economic Development (2 intents)
- Civic Engagement (2 intents)

“Crosswalk” Example from Five-Year Plan

State Goal	IMLS Focal Area(s)	Associated Project	IMLS Intent
#1 Lifespan Learning	Lifelong Learning	STEM for All	Improve users’ general knowledge and skills
		Summer Reading	Improve users’ formal education
		Senior Encore	Improve users’ general knowledge and skills
#2 Community Connections	Human Services, Civic Engagement	Financial Literacy 101	Improve users’ ability to apply information that furthers their personal, family, or household finances
		One Book	Improve users’ ability to participate in community conversations around topics of concern
#3 Trained Workforce	Institutional Capacity	School Library Boot Camp	Improve the library workforce
		CE Pursuits	Improve the library workforce
		Accreditation	Improve the library workforce



Retrospective Question 3

Question

- Did any of the following groups represent a “substantial focus” of an SLAA Five-Year Plan’s activities?
- For those who answer YES to any of these groups, please discuss what extent each group was reached.

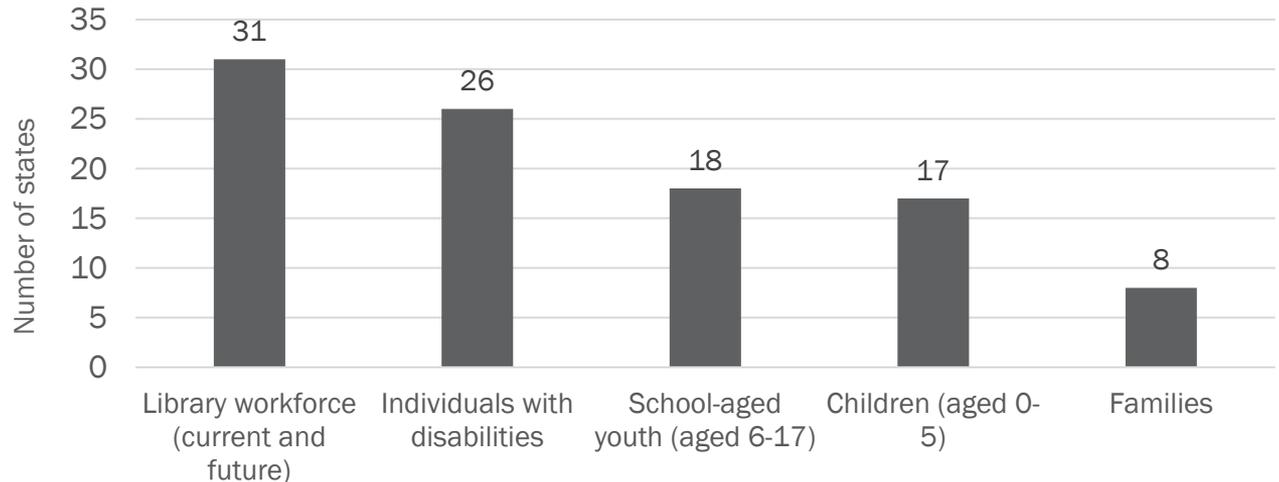
Groups

- Library workforce (current and future)
- Individuals living below the poverty line
- Ethnic or minority populations
- Immigrants/refugees
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with limited functional literacy of information skills
- Families
- Children (aged 0-5)
- School-aged youth (aged 6-17)

Last Cycle Data: Beneficiary Groups

- Library Workforce was a “substantial focus” for the highest number of states
- 6 states noted no substantial focus on specific beneficiary groups

Beneficiary Groups as a “Substantial Focus” for States



Other beneficiary groups reported, but not included in chart above include:

- Ethnic or minority populations (5 states)
- Individuals living below the poverty line (5 states)
- Individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills (4 states)
- Individuals that are unemployed/underemployed (3 states)
- Immigrants/refugees (0 states)

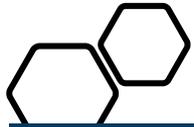


Retrospective Question 3

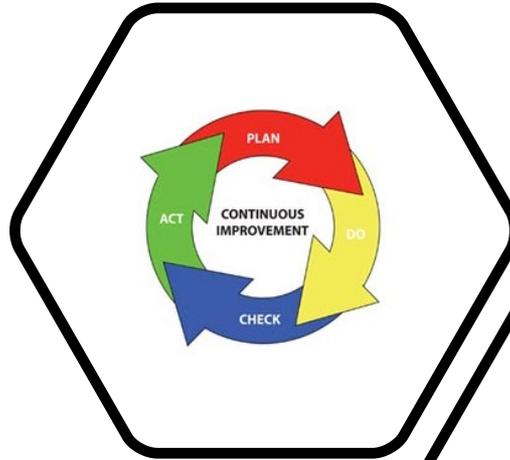
Question: beneficiaries with a “substantial focus”

“For the purposes of this question, a substantial focus would represent at least ten percent of the total amount of resources committed by the overall plan across multiple years.”

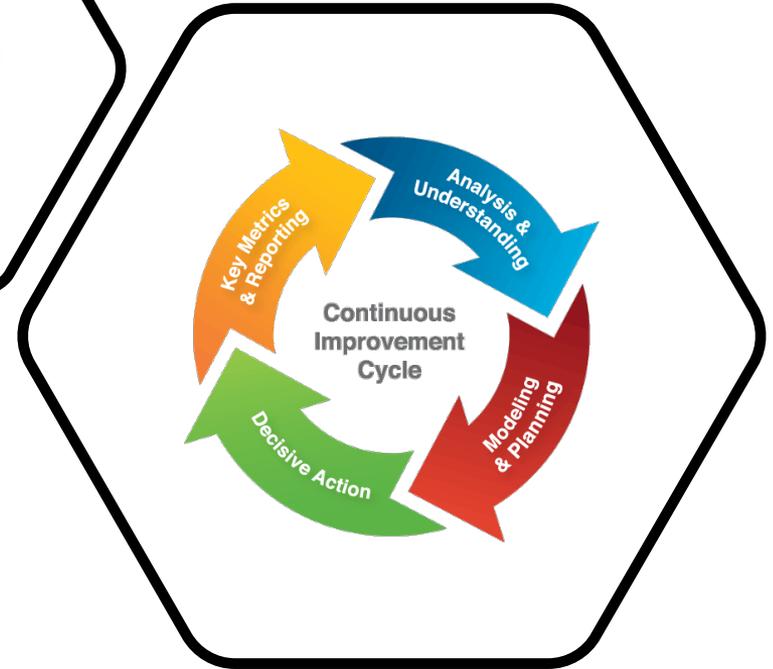
- Includes LSTA and Match
- Covers 2018, 2019, and 2020, cumulatively



Process Questions



- How has an SLAA used data from the SPR and elsewhere to guide activities in its Five-Year Plan?
- Specify any changes made in the Five-Year Plan and why these occurred?
- How and with whom did an SLAA share data from the SPR and from other evaluation resources?
- [NEW] How did the last evaluation inform this one? How have you used this information throughout the cycle?





Final \$.02

- Good evaluation means it is addressing meaningful questions.
- Good evaluators ensure scientific validity AND stakeholder usefulness.
- Buffer the project schedule to anticipate and adapt to the unexpected.
- Prepare for dissemination.

Reminders



ENSURE TO SELECT AN
INDEPENDENT EVALUATOR



REMEMBER TO NOT
INCLUDE CARES ACT FUNDS
IN THIS EVALUATION.



10% THRESHOLD FOR
BENEFICIARY GROUPS –
CALCULATE IT ACROSS THE
ENTIRE 3-YEAR SPAN OF
SPENDING (NOT JUST BY
SINGLE GOAL AREA)



PLAN FOR OTHERS' USE
BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER
THE EVALUATION



Next Steps

How IMLS Can Help

Next steps: How IMLS can help

- IMLS will provide FY 2018-2019 SPR data
- IMLS will host an evaluator community of practice (likely summer/fall)
- Contact IMLS state program officers and evaluation officers for questions.



States' Plans for Rolling Out 5-Year Evaluations

Poll

Questions?

Thank You!

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