LIBRARIES, BROADBAND, AND DIGITAL INCLUSION

INSTITUTE *of* **Museum**and**Library** SERVICES

IMLS supports the evolving role of libraries as centers for access to technology.

IMLS AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

IMLS-funded digital access, devices, tools, and services—along with the Federal Communication Commission's E-rate program to help schools and libraries obtain affordable broadband—constitute an important technology infrastructure for libraries.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

Digital inclusion is the concept that individuals and communities should be afforded access to and use of computers, mobile devices, and the Internet. In addition to access, an underlying principle of digital inclusion is that individuals and communities require the knowledge, skills, background content, and technical support services necessary to use these technologies.

The goal of digital inclusion is to transcend barriers, allowing individuals to access and use technology. To help increase public access to information, ideas, and networks, IMLS supports digital inclusion projects and the development of library technology infrastructure.

IMLS's largest grant program, Grants to States, funds over 1,500 projects each year that meet the purposes and priorities outlined in the Library Services and Technology Act. The program helps libraries assess connectivity needs, procure affordable broadband services, complete E-rate applications, train staff, and obtain technology. In 2014 and 2015, 38 states and three U.S. territories invested approximately $17,640,494 in IMLS funds towards broadband activities. Thirty of 56 state libraries (53.5%) indicated plans to fund activities related to broadband areas in 2018-2022 with IMLS funds.

BY THE NUMBERS

Older adults, rural residents, those with lower levels of education and income, and racial minorities are less likely to have broadband service at home.*

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The Internet is a main resource for many of today's job hunters. Among Americans who have looked for work in the last two years, **79 percent** used online resources in their most recent job search and **34 percent** say these online resources were the most important tool available to them.*

*Source: Pew Research Center studies from February 2018 and November 2015

IMLS GRANTS

IMLS invests in research and projects to address the challenges of Internet connectivity, including for residents of rural and tribal areas. Examples include:

- The pilot project of the University Corporation for Advanced Internet Development (Internet 2) and its tribal, association, and state library partners to develop a library broadband network assessment toolkit and training program for rural and tribal libraries across five states.

- The State Library of North Carolina and its state agency partners' work to design a model demonstrating the role North Carolina's public libraries can play in promoting broadband access to address the K-12 homework gap in their communities.

- A San Jose State University project to help libraries explore how to dramatically expand Internet access in their communities with TV White Space, a new low-cost technology that taps into unused broadcasting frequencies in the wireless spectrum, to help improve disaster preparedness.

- A collaborative virtual reference service project in Florida that provides live assistance to residents across the state at their moment of need via chat, email, and text messaging.

- As part of a recent cooperative agreement with IMLS, the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, a part of the PAST Foundation, developed a pilot project with the goal of increasing digital inclusion in rural and tribal communities through local digital literacy trainers.

- A project from the University of Texas at Austin, in partnership with the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University, to examine how rural libraries address the challenge of Internet connectivity with hotspot lending programs.

IMLS funding also empowers library staff to help individuals develop the digital skills they need for success in education, employment, and civic engagement. Examples include:

- The Public Library Association's DigitalLearn.org project, an online hub for digital literacy support and training.

- Portland State University's Learner Web, a learning support system for adults.

- Minnesota libraries' Digital Navigators project to improve the digital literacy skills of third and fourth grade students and their teachers through curriculum on digital citizenship, media literacy, and word processing.

- In Vermont, a project involving six public libraries to train their local communities in digital literacy as part of a Job Hunt Helpers program, providing online information on careers, career testing, and online tutorials in academic and job training areas of study.

BY THE NUMBERS

52 percent of Americans feel that people without home broadband are at a major disadvantage when it comes to accessing job opportunities or improving their career skills.*

99.2 percent of public libraries provide Internet access according data from the 2015 Public Libraries Survey.**

Source: Pew Research Center study from December 2015

**Source: Institute of Museum and Library Services, Public Library Administrative Entity Data File Public Libraries Survey, FY 2015

ABOUT IMLS

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. Our vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities.

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