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

Dennis Nangle

March 30, 2021
Overall Timeline

- Oct. 1, 2019
- Oct. 1, 2020
- Oct. 1, 2021
- Oct. 1, 2022
- Oct. 1, 2023

FY 2020 2-year award
FY 2021 2-year award
FY 2022 2-year award
FY 2023 2-year award
CARES Act award
ARPA award

SPR award
SPR award
SPR award
SPR award

March 30, 2022 – Evals due
June 30, 2022 – Plans due
Oct. 1, 2022 – New five-year cycle begins
April 2024 – SPR goals can change
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

- Do not include CARES Act funds/activities as part of the formal evaluation
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 SLAs and IMLS
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.


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”)

• 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:

- New Evaluator Community of Practice

- 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
One Consumer Tip: Choosing an Evaluator

Guiding Principle: Balance Scientific Objectivity with Stakeholder Trust

Independence ← Credibility
Organizational/environment understanding
Adaptability/transferability
Costs and manageability
• 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**

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**Multiple Methods for Data Analysis**
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

- Document review: 56
- Surveys: 45
- Interviews: 40
- Focus groups: 39
- Other*: 7
- Library data (state repository): 5

*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)
• 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

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.
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.
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

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

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

**Beneficiary Groups as a “Substantial Focus” for States**

- Library workforce (current and future) - 31
- Individuals with disabilities - 26
- School-aged youth (aged 6-17) - 18
- Children (aged 0-5) - 17
- Families - 8

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?
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
Questions?
Thank You!

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