



2023-2027 Five-Year Evaluations

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Agenda

1. Intro to the Five-Year Evaluation (Recap)
2. Evaluator Community of Practice Forum
3. Breakouts:
 1. Getting Started
 2. Working on the Evaluation
4. Group Share-out / Q&A



Data Detectives

Over the next year, you'll be detectives solving questions like:

- What worked? How was it done? In what State or Territory?

Today's cast of characters:

- Professor Purple
- Inspector Orange
- Trailblazer Teal



Image source: Stock image of castle, MS Office

Intro to the Five-Year Evaluation - Recap



Federal Statute Requires the Evaluation

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

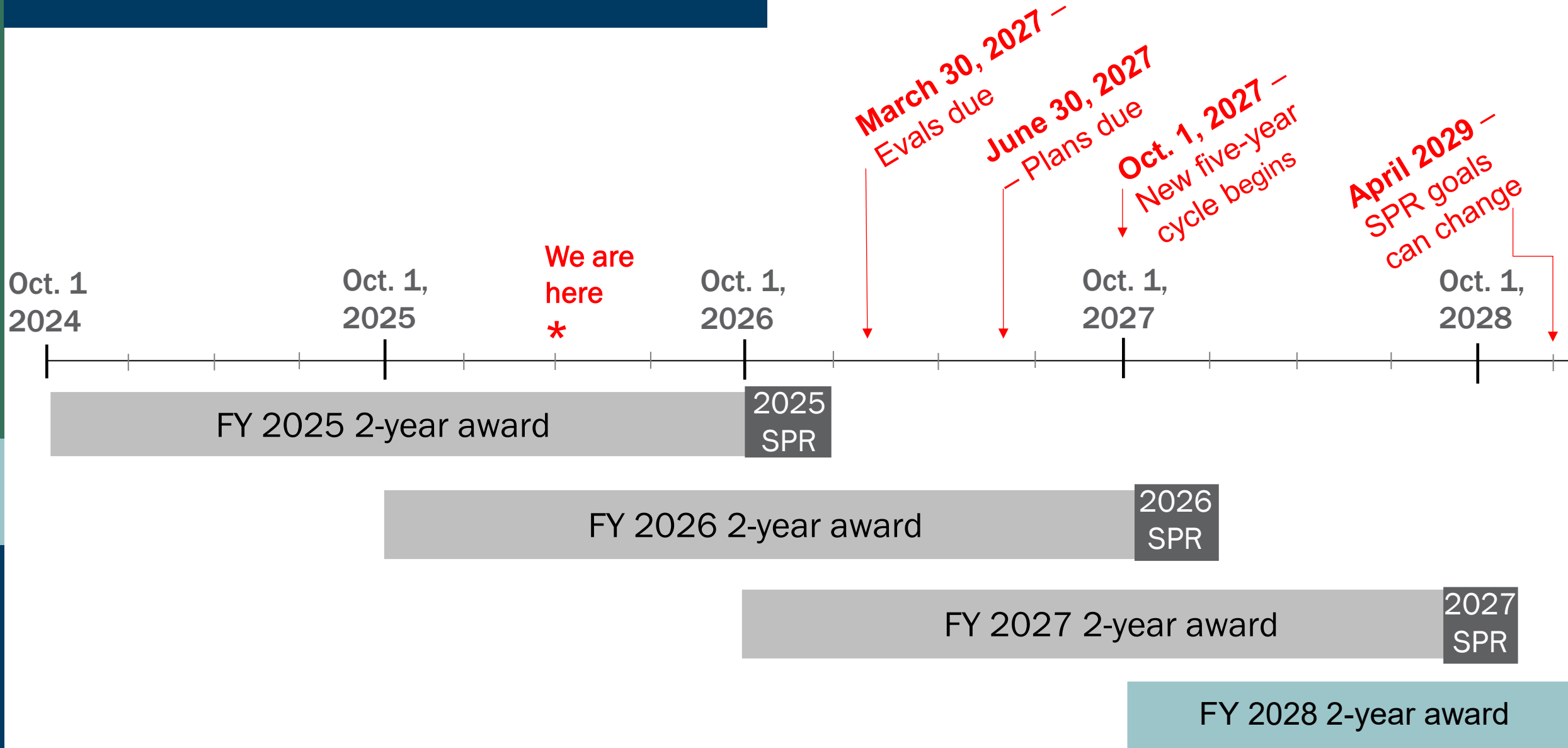
(c) Evaluation and report

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 ([FYs 2023, 2024, 2025](#)).

Program 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).

Overall Timeline





2023-2027 Guidelines

- See: [Five-Year Evaluation Guidelines in the G2S Manual](#)
- Specifies:
 - Formatting & page numbers
 - Retrospective questions
 - Process questions
 - Evaluation methodology



Connecting People to Information and Ideas

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 2023- 2027 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



Format

- Cover Page (1 page)
- Evaluation Summary (2-5 pages)
- Evaluation Report (25 pages max)
- Appendices (not incl. in the 25 pages)

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This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Retrospective Question A-1

To what extent did an SLAA Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards each goal? Describe what key factors contributed to the outcome (e.g., budget, staffing, partners, etc.)

- Organize findings around each goal.
- Categorize goals as either Achieved, Partly Achieved or Not Achieved.

Table 1 - Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries' and Evaluators' Assessment of Achievement		
GOAL	Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries' Internal Assessment	Evaluators' Assessment
GOAL 1: Lifelong Learning and Literacy: Develop and improve services and collaborations with community organizations in all types of libraries for individuals of all ages in order to support their needs for lifelong learning and literacy competencies in areas such as basic, civic and social, digital, financial, health, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
GOAL 2: Digital Library Services: Increase and improve Pennsylvanians' access, knowledge, and ability to use and share digital library services, resources, and content.	Partly Achieved	Achieved
GOAL 3: Training and Support: Support and enhance the skills of library staff and leadership, advance the delivery of library services, and improve public libraries' engagement with local community members through continuing education, professional development and the provision of statistical and analytical tools as well as research.	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
GOAL 4: Underserved and Populations with Special Needs: Develop and improve services and community organization collaborations in all types of libraries for underserved populations or for Pennsylvanians who have difficulty using libraries, especially those who live in poverty or who have a disability.	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
GOAL 5: Workforce Development: Develop and improve workforce development services and community organization collaborations in all types of libraries for individuals of all ages.	Not Achieved	Not Achieved



Retrospective Question A-2

Question

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

Focal Areas and Intents

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



“Crosswalk” Example from Five-Year Plan

Goal 1: Information Preservation and Access

Need	Focal Area	Project	Intent(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to information and resources• Community connection and collaboration	Information Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statewide databases• Statewide resource sharing• Government information digitization• Reading Arizona• Arizona Memory Project• Arizona newspapers• Arizona legal resources• State Archives conservation and digitization activities• Increasing access for visually impaired veterans• Talking Book Library discovery and access• Subgrants to public, tribal, school, special and academic libraries for information preservation, digitization, discovery and access• Other programming as identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve users' ability to discover information.• Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources.



Note on Retrospective Question A-3

A-3: Beneficiaries with a substantial focus:

“Did any of the following groups represent a substantial focus for your Five-Year Plan activities? (Yes/No)...

...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.”

- IMLS is seeking approval to remove this question, but the determination will be coming this summer (~July).
 - Therefore, plan for this question in case it is not removed.
 - IMLS will still accept evaluations that include the beneficiary question, even if we get approval to remove it.



Process & Methodology Questions

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 at the goal level 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?
- How did the last evaluation inform this one? How have you used this information throughout the cycle?

Methodology Questions:

- Describe how the Five-Year Evaluation was implemented independently using the criteria described in the section of this guidance document called Selection of an Independent Evaluator.
- Describe the types of statistical and qualitative methods (including administrative records) used in conducting the Five-Year Evaluation. Describe their validity and reliability.
- Describe the critical partners involved in the development of the various stages of the Five-Year Evaluation and how they were engaged?



IMLS Review of Evaluations

- Must submit to IMLS by March 30, 2027
- It is normal for us to ask for clarifications or edits
- For evaluations, IMLS “accepts” them, rather than “grading” them
- G2S Program Officers have 90 days (April-June 2027) to finish reviewing all five-year evaluations
- IMLS will send official letters of acceptance

- See examples from last cycle:

<https://www.imls.gov/find-funding/funding-opportunities/grants-to-states/five-year-evaluations>

Evaluator Community of Practice (CoP)



Forum Overview

<https://www.imls.gov/group/3>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with two tabs: "Evaluator Community of Practice" and "Community of Practice for 5 Year". The address bar displays "https://www.imls.gov/group/3". The page header features the IMLS logo (INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES) and a "MENU" button. Below the header are three blue buttons labeled "Members", "Posts", and "Documents". The main content area contains a welcome message: "Welcome to the Community of Practice (CoP) for evaluators working on Grants to States 5 year evaluations. This CoP offers opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement and access to documentation." It also includes a request for participation: "We ask that participants in this CoP use this site to crowdsource information sharing and as a collective problem-solving platform. To that end, please contribute as you are able and treat all colleagues with mutual respect." and contact information: "If you have any questions about the site, comments, or intent please email Lisa Hechtman, IMLS Social Science Research Analyst, at lhechtman@imls.gov". The footer shows a home icon and the breadcrumb "Home / Community of Practice for 5 Year Evaluations".



Documents

- Resources for your evaluators (and you)

Title	Authored By	Tag
GUIDELINES FOR IMLS GRANTS TO STATES FIVE-YEAR EVALUATION	lhechtman@imls.gov	Guidance
Overview: Preparing for the Five-Year Evaluation	lhechtman@imls.gov	Overview
State Program Report Data Resources	lhechtman@imls.gov	Documentation
ARCHIVE (2022) - 5 Year Evaluators_Meeting 8: Wrapping Up_recording & slides	eplagman@imls.gov	Archived Discussion



Forum

- Message board for peer discussion

Title	Authored By	Tag	Updated
Evaluator Community of Practice Re-Launch - Welcome and Introductions!	lhechtman@imls.gov	Introductions, Welcome	01/29/2026 - 09:02
5 Year Evaluators_Meeting 8: 3/17 at 2 pm ET	eplagman@imls.gov		03/14/2022 - 15:59
5 Year Evaluators_Meeting 7: 2/22 at 3 pm ET	eplagman@imls.gov		02/16/2022 - 14:14



To Join the CoP

- Login through SPR button

click here to enter the evaluation
community of practice.

- Or by requesting forum access – send evaluator's name and email to: lhechtman@imls.gov

Breakouts



Breakout Topics

Tips and Reminders Before Each Breakout

1. Getting Started
2. Working on the Evaluation

Topic 1: Getting Started



Paying for the Evaluations/Plans

- Can be either LSTA project funds, administrative funds, or state funds. See: https://imls.gov/sites/default/files/administrativecosts_feb2015.pdf
- 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).



Independent Evaluations

IMLS Authorization requires “independent” evaluations.

- Independent evaluations are objective (carried out free from outside influence).
 - Most states have historically used 3rd party evaluators.
- Evaluations can be done in-house if those conducting the evaluations are not directly reporting to those with managerial responsibilities for LSTA-funded services.

Tips – Choosing an Evaluator:

- Balance Independence with Credibility:
 - Evaluator needs the organizational, environmental, and contextual understanding to interpret data and make useful recommendations.
- Consider costs and feasibility; **plan for unexpected challenges and delays.**



Other Tips – Getting Started

First, find out “Who owns the process?”

- For example, who is in charge of procurement (if applicable)?

What do you want to get from the evaluation?

- Evaluations vary in level of detail and methodology, as well as associated costs.
- Will your evaluator also assist with the next 5-year plan?

Resources from peers: spreadsheet of past evaluators, example RFPs, and online forum.

- [Example RFP](#), from California State Library

Breakout Groups – Data Detectives

- **Professor Purple**: You've done one or more 5-year evaluations before
- **Inspector Orange**: You've gotten started with your 5-year evaluation
- **Trailblazer Teal**: You're new to evaluations and ready to learn from your peers!





Norms

- Fully participate
 - listen actively
 - contribute
 - leave “space” in the conversation for others
- Adapt for your comfort level
 - questions are guiding
 - group discussions won't be posted online



Discussion Topics – Getting Started (20 Minutes)

1) Please introduce yourself and your experience with 5-year evaluations.

2) **Discussion Topics – Getting Started:**

- At what point are you in your **evaluation planning**?
- How are you selecting/have you **selected an evaluator**?
- What are you **budgeting** for your evaluation?
- What **tips or questions** do you have for others?

Topic 2: Working on the Evaluation



Working on the Evaluation

- Once you select an evaluator, there will still be work ahead, e.g.,:
 - Sharing SPR data
 - Note: Evaluation is of 2023, 2024, and 2025
 - 2025 reports aren't due until Jan. 28, 2027, so you may need to provide earlier data to your evaluator
 - Potentially sharing contact lists for surveys/interviews/focus groups
 - Providing documents and context
 - Reviewing evaluator's work, revisions from IMLS



Multiple Sources of Data for the Evaluation

State Program Report (SPR) data (*NEW: Self-Serve!*)

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

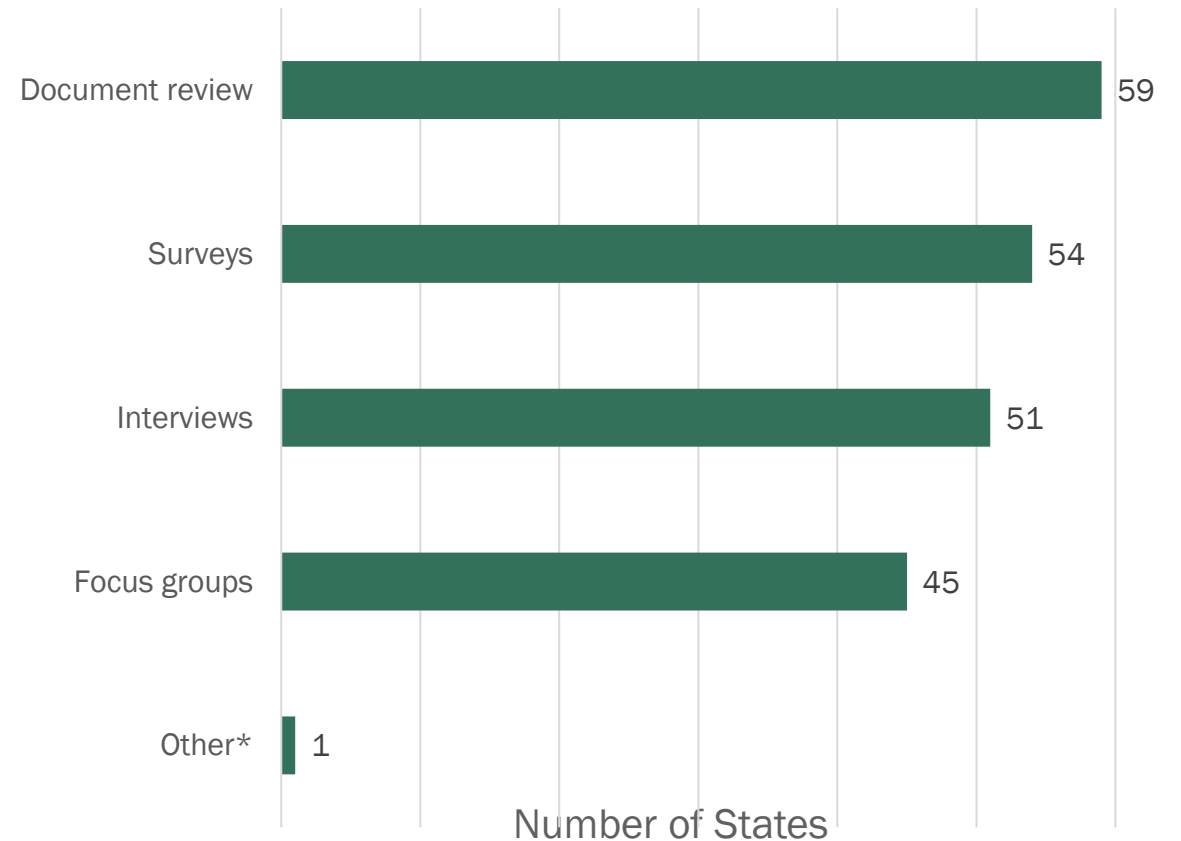
Photos/videos



Last Cycle Data: Methods

- All states' evaluators used document review (including SPR data)
- Most evaluators used a combination of surveys, interviews, and focus groups to triangulate for goal achievement

Number of States' Evaluations Reporting Each Method



*Other included: Town Hall

Self-Serve SPR Data (Excel)



- 2025 reports aren't due until Jan. 28, 2027, so you may need to provide earlier data to your evaluator

SPR Data Export

Select Start Year, End Year and Project Status(es) from below options to generate the report. Clicking the "Generate Reports" button will start the report generation process. This may take a few minutes time to complete depending on the number of years selected and starting any other functionality in the IMLS SPR application will stop the report generation process.

Options to download files are displayed when the file generation is completed. Click "Download" to download individual file and save to local folders.

Select Start Year: 2023 ▾

Select End Year: 2025 ▾

Select Status(es):

- Draft
- Completed
- Certified
- Approved
- Returned
- Accepted

Generate Reports

Breakout Groups – Data Detectives

- **Professor Purple**: You've done one or more 5-year evaluations before
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Discussion Topics – Working on the Evaluation (20 Minutes)

1) Please introduce yourself and your experience with 5-year evaluations.

2) Discussion Topics – Working on the Evaluation:

- What questions/tips do you have on **sharing data** with your evaluator?
- What tips would you share for **working with an evaluator**? What questions do you have?
- What **worked well** for you during your last 5-year evaluation? What would you **change**?
- How did your last evaluation **inform your** most recent **5-year plan**?

Q&A and Share-out



Q&A and Share-out

- What came up in your discussion that you think the group should hear?
- What remaining questions do you have?