



Five-Year Evaluations

Teri DeVoe, Associate Deputy Director



Overview

- Why, When, and How (to pay for it)
- Guidelines
- Obtaining an Independent Evaluator
- Evaluation Questions and Strategies
- Resources
- Questions



Federal Statute Requires the Evaluation

- U.S.C. § 9134(c) – 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.

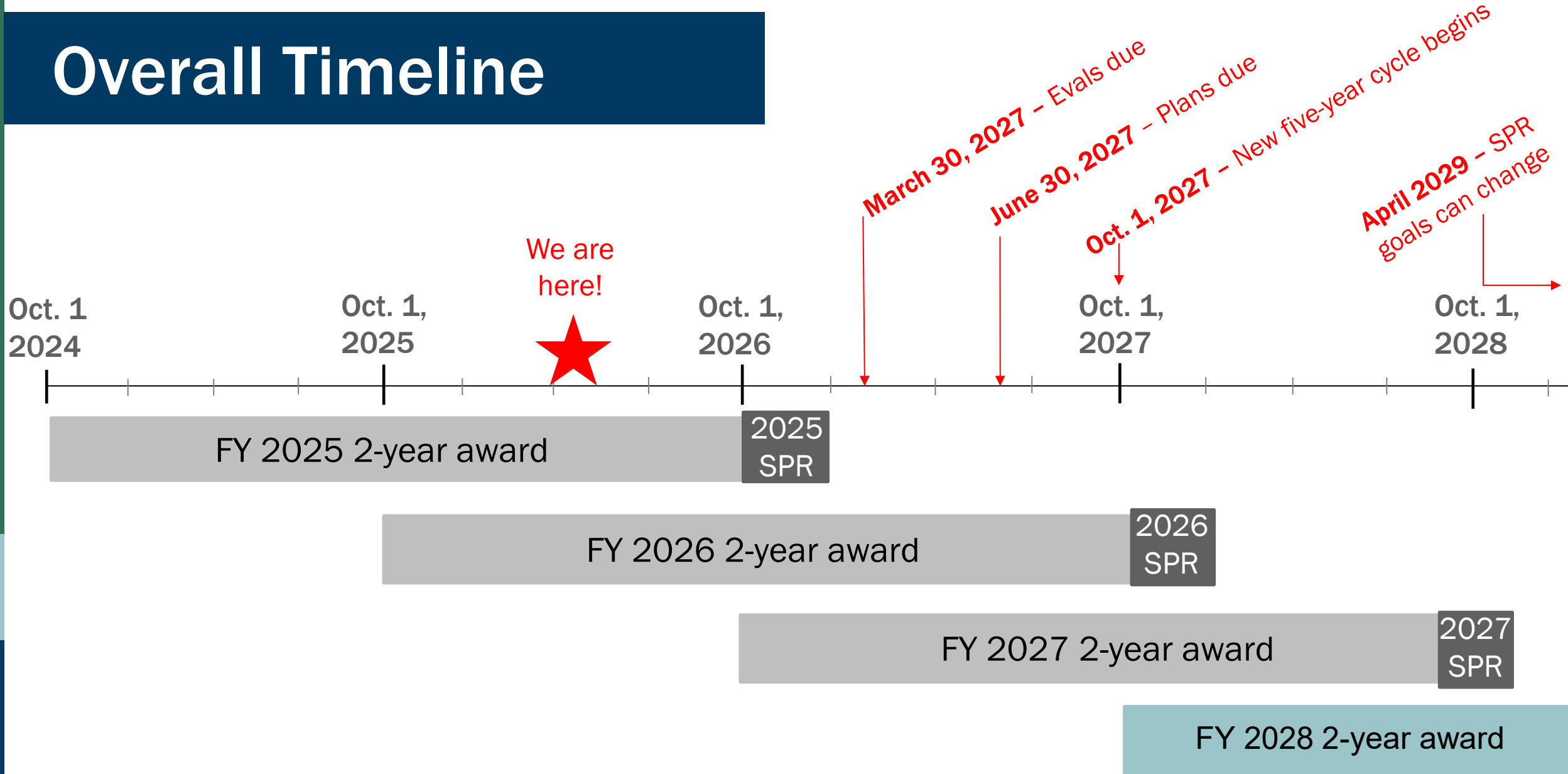
- Note: the SLAA “shall independently evaluate...”
- Because the timeframe is “prior to the end of the 5-year plan,” it sets the 3-year timeframe for the evaluation (2023, 2024, 2025).



Rationale

1. Comply with 20 U.S.C. § 9134(c) for independently evaluating and reporting of what happened during prior 5-year plan
2. Enable assessments at state/territory level, as well as national level
3. **And, importantly, uncover useful learnings:**
 - Highlight effective past practices (“Retrospective Questions”)
 - Assess processes for implementing grantmaking (“Process Questions”)
 - Develop key findings and recommendations to inform the next Five-Year Plan
 - Share findings and strengthen relationships with key partners and other SLAAs

Overall Timeline



Oct. 1
2024

Oct. 1,
2025

We are
here!

Oct. 1,
2026

March 30, 2027 -- Evals due

June 30, 2027 -- Plans due

Oct. 1, 2027 -- New five-year cycle begins

April 2029 -- SPR
goals can change

Oct. 1,
2027

Oct. 1,
2028

FY 2025 2-year award

2025
SPR

FY 2026 2-year award

2026
SPR

FY 2027 2-year award

2027
SPR

FY 2028 2-year award



Paying for the Evaluation/Plan

- 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).



2023-2027 Guidelines

- See: [Five-Year Evaluation Guidelines on the IMLS website](#)
- 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)

Table of Contents

Part A. Evaluation Summary

Summary of the key findings for the three retrospective and three process questions.....1

Part B. Body of the Report

Background of the Five-Year Plan and Evaluation.....4

Discussion of the findings for the three retrospective and three process questions.....4

Retrospective questions relative to the four GPLS goals.....8

A-1 Extent to which the five-year plan activities made progress towards the goals.....

Goal #1. Expand, support and improve library programs and services.....

Goal #2. Provision of continuous professional development.....

Goal #3. Ensure equitable access to library services for individuals with disabilities.....

Goal #4. Information technology updates.....

A-2 Extent to which funds were spent on the Measuring Success focal areas.....

A-3 Areas that were of substantial focus during the Five-Year Plan.....

Process Questions.....20

B-1 Use of SPR data to guide activities included in the Five-Year Plan.....

B-2 Modifications made to the Five-Year Plan.....

B-3 Use of SPR and the last Five-Year Evaluation throughout the five-year cycle.....

Methodology Questions.....21

C-1 Guidance on the selection of an Independent Evaluator.....

C-2 Statistical and Qualitative Methods used in conducting the Five-Year Evaluation.....

C-3 Stakeholder engagement in the various stages of the Five-Year Evaluation.....

C-4 Strategies for sharing key findings and recommendations of the Five-Year Evaluation..

Part C. Recommendations and Laying the Groundwork for the Next Five Years.....24

Appendices



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.**



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.



Obtaining an Independent Evaluator

- Open discussion
- Last cycle (2018-2022) evaluators, for reference:
 - Joyce Chapman/Quality Metrics (American Samoa, Northern Marianas, Palau)
 - ERS Consultant Service (Guam)
 - David Fazzino (Federated States of Micronesia)
 - Kirsten Robinson (Marshall Islands)



Retrospective Question 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.)

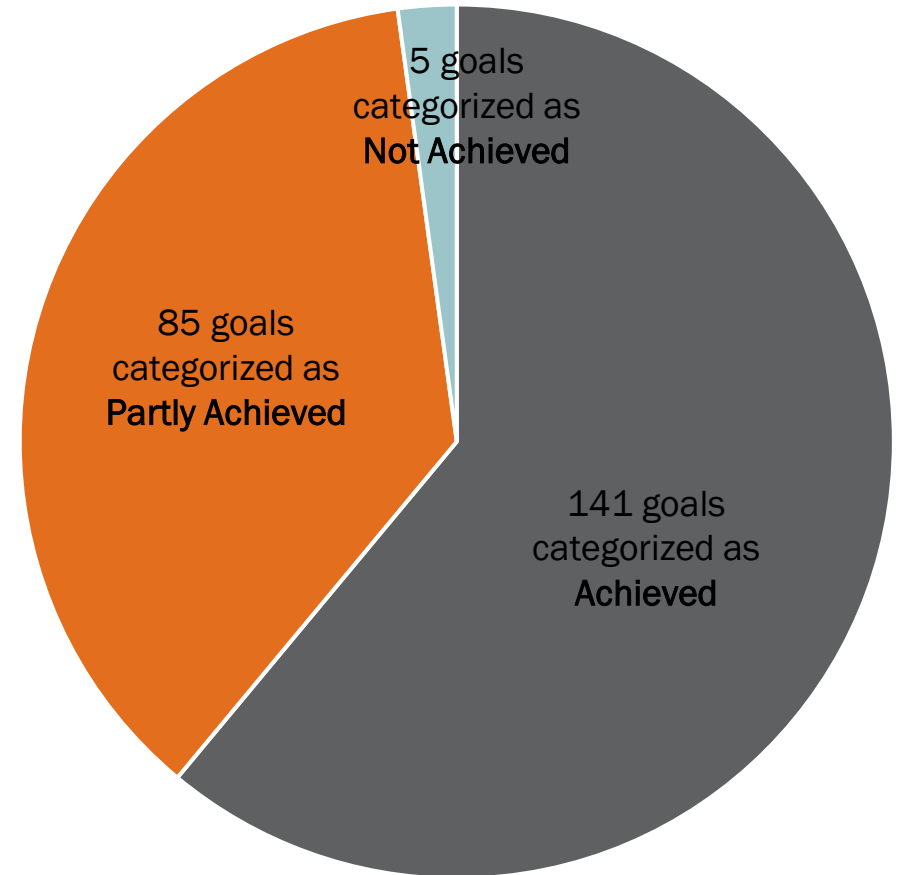
- Organize findings around each goal.
- Categorize goals as either Achieved, Partly Achieved, or Not Achieved.

Goal	Self-Assessment	Evaluator's Assessment
Goal 1: Enhance Information Access. (Intent: Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources.)	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
Goal 2: Expand services for learning. (Intent: Improve users' formal education.)	Not Achieved	Not Achieved
Goal 3: Expand the Summer Reading Program. (Intent: improve users' general knowledge and skills.)	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
Goal 4: Provide library training, professional development, and recruitment. (Intent: improve the library workforce.)	Not Achieved	Not Achieved

Last Cycle Data: Goals

- Out of 231 goals across all states, the majority (141 or 61%) were categorized as Achieved
- 18 states categorized all goals as Achieved
- 5 states categorized all goals as Partly Achieved
- 36 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
- Etc. [“e.g., staffing, budget, overambitious goals, partners”]
- 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



Retrospective Question 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)



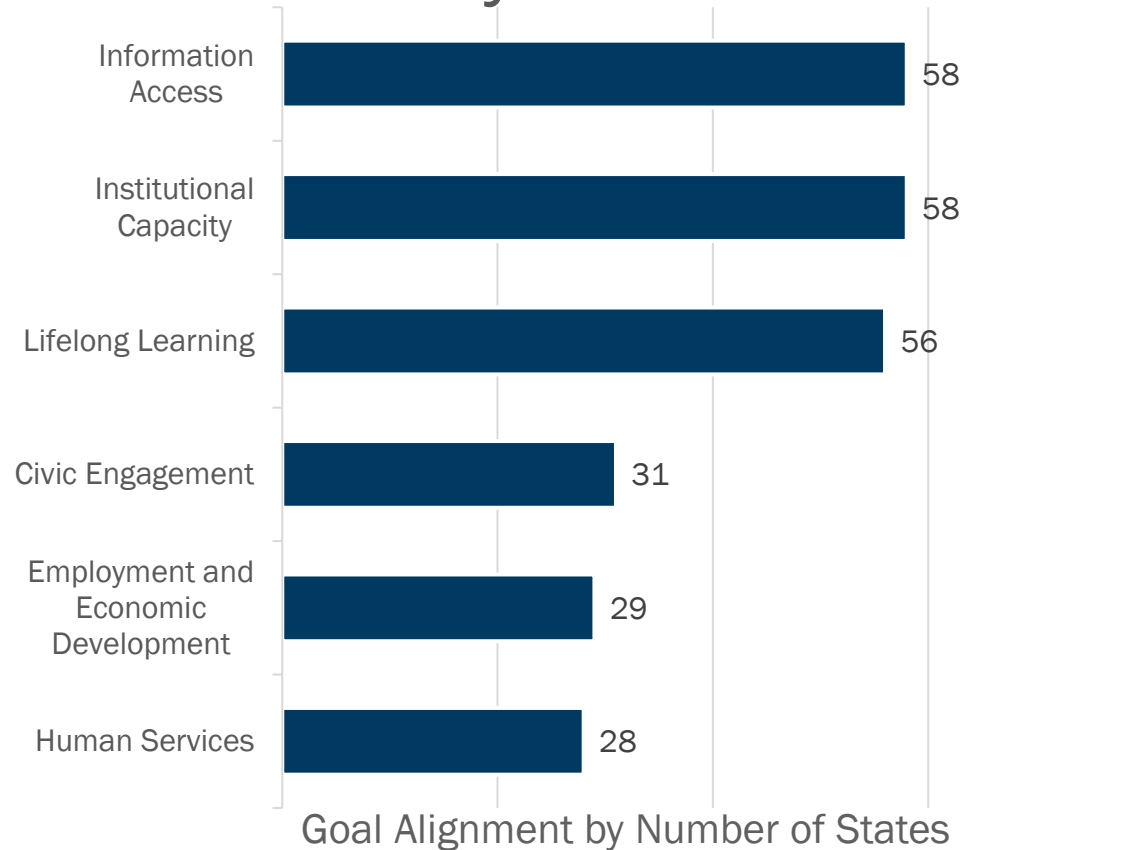
“Crosswalk” Example from Five-Year Plan

Five-Year Crosswalk			
State Goal	IMLS Focal Area(s)	Associated Project	IMLS Intent
Goal 1: Update library collection development and support programs and outreach activities	Lifelong Learning Information Access	Increase and update library materials in all format	Improve users’ ability to discover information resources
		Collaborate with NGOs	Improve users’ ability to obtain and/or use information resources
		Increase and implement library programs to promote reading	Improve users’ formal education
		Improve digital literacy skills	Improve users’ general knowledge and skills
Goal 2: Improve Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and technology upgrade	Institutional Capacity Information Access	Renew and upgrade the OPAC	Improve library operations
		Upgrade Library Technology	Improve library’s physical and technology infrastructure
		Expand and recruit other libraries to connect to OPAC	Improve users’ ability to discover information resources
		Technology Trainings	Improve the library workforce

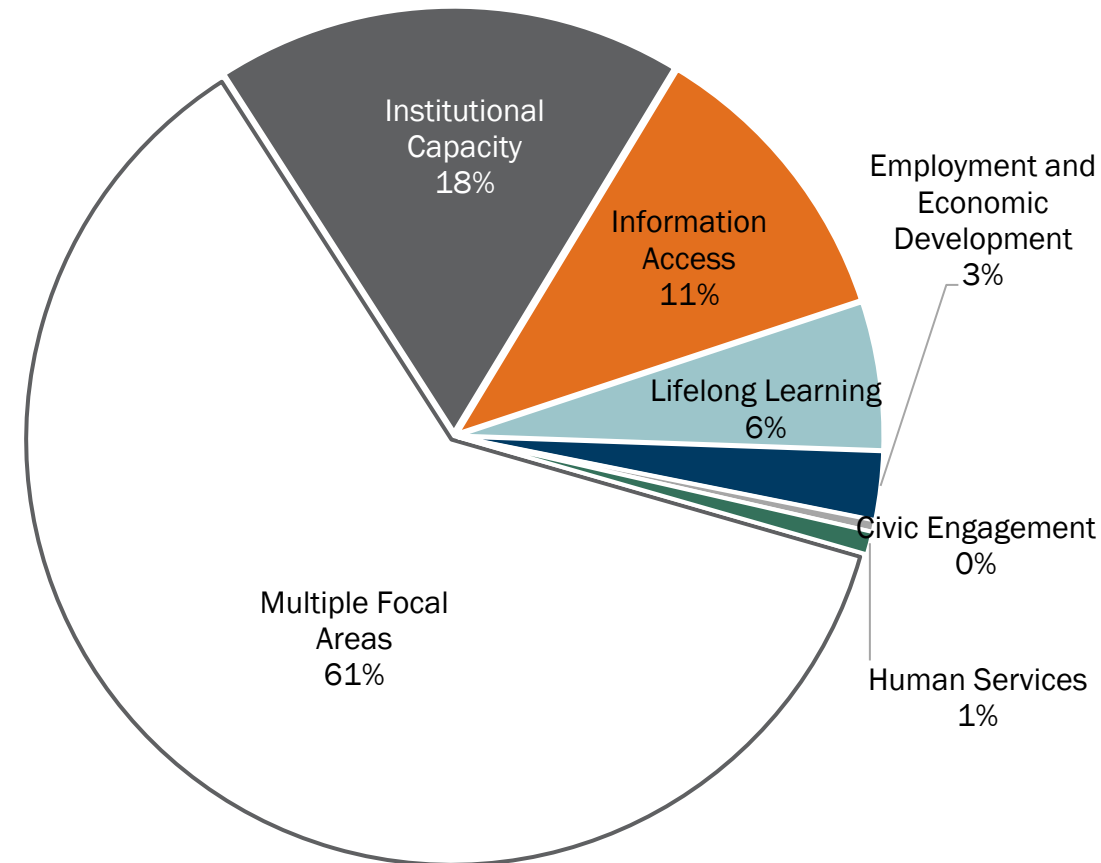


Last Cycle Data: Focal Areas

2018-22 Goal Alignment with Focal Areas by Number of States



2018-22 Goal Categorization by Multiple or Single IMLS Focal Area(s)



Retrospective Question 3

Be prepared for this, just in case!

Question

- Did any of the following groups represent a substantial focus for your Five-Year Plan activities?
- For YES groups, please discuss to what extent they were reached.
- Include other important groups, as needed.

GROUP	YES/NO
Library workforce (current and future)	YES
Individuals living below the poverty line	YES
Individuals that are unemployed/underemployed	YES
Ethnic or minority populations	YES
Immigrants/refugees	NO
Individuals with disabilities	NO
Individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills	NO
Families	NO
Children (aged 0-5)	NO



Beneficiary groups 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.”

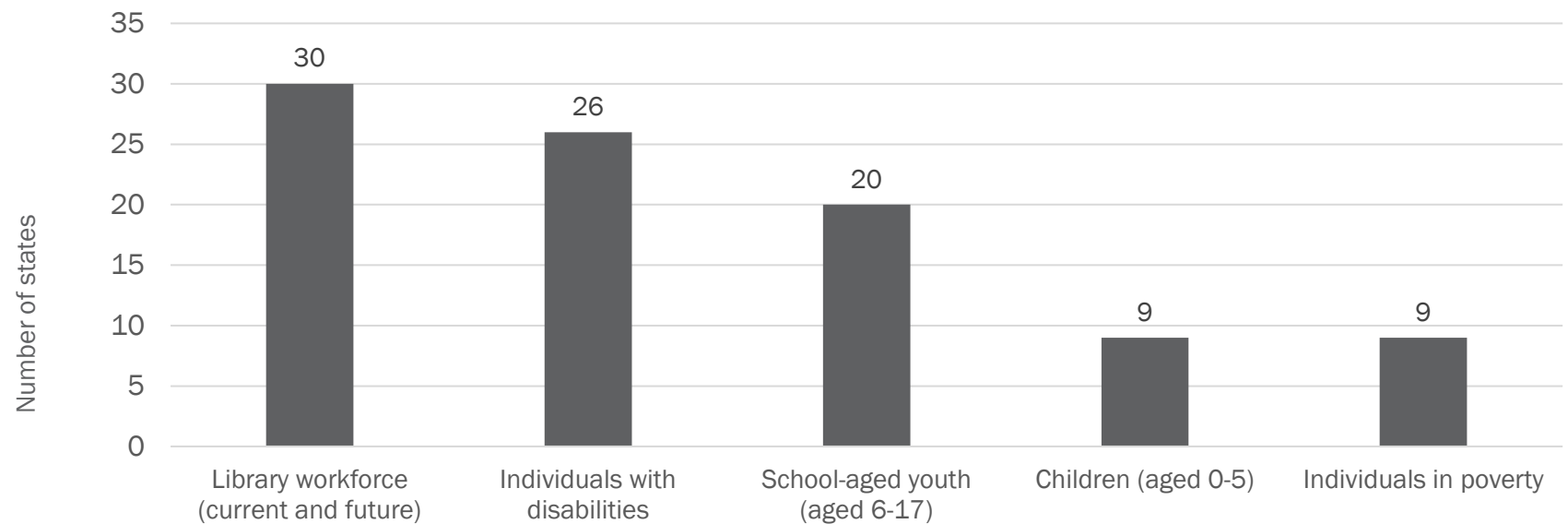
- Includes LSTA and Match
- Covers 2023, 2024, and 2025, cumulatively



Last Cycle Data: Beneficiary Groups

Library Workforce was a “substantial focus” for the highest number of states

Beneficiary Groups as a “Substantial Focus” for States

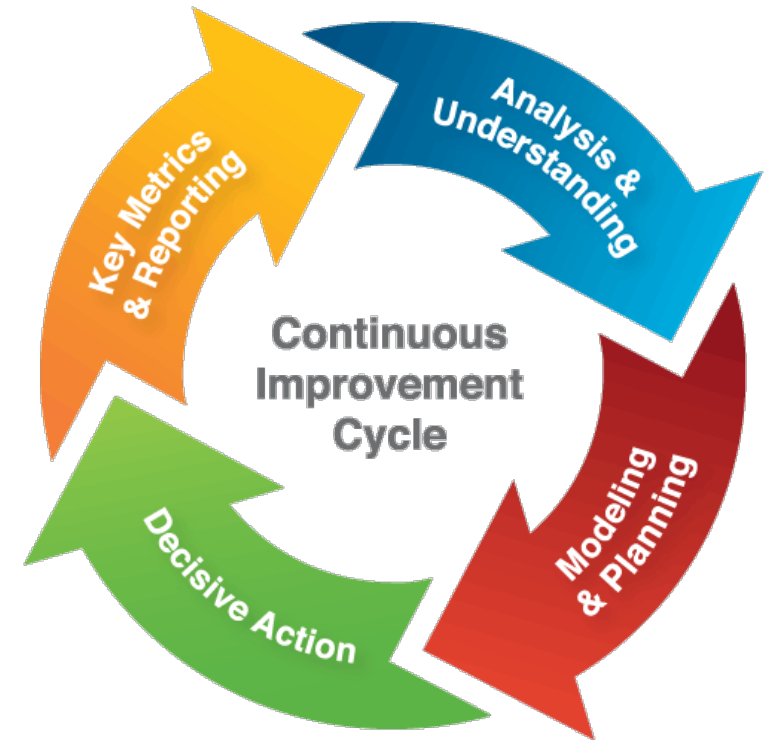


Other beneficiary groups reported, but not included in chart above include:

- Families (8 states)
- Ethnic or minority populations (8 states)
- Individuals that are unemployed/underemployed (6 states)
- Individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills (5 states)
- Immigrants/refugees (2 states)

Process Questions

- How did you use data from the SPR and elsewhere to guide activities in the 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 you 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?





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

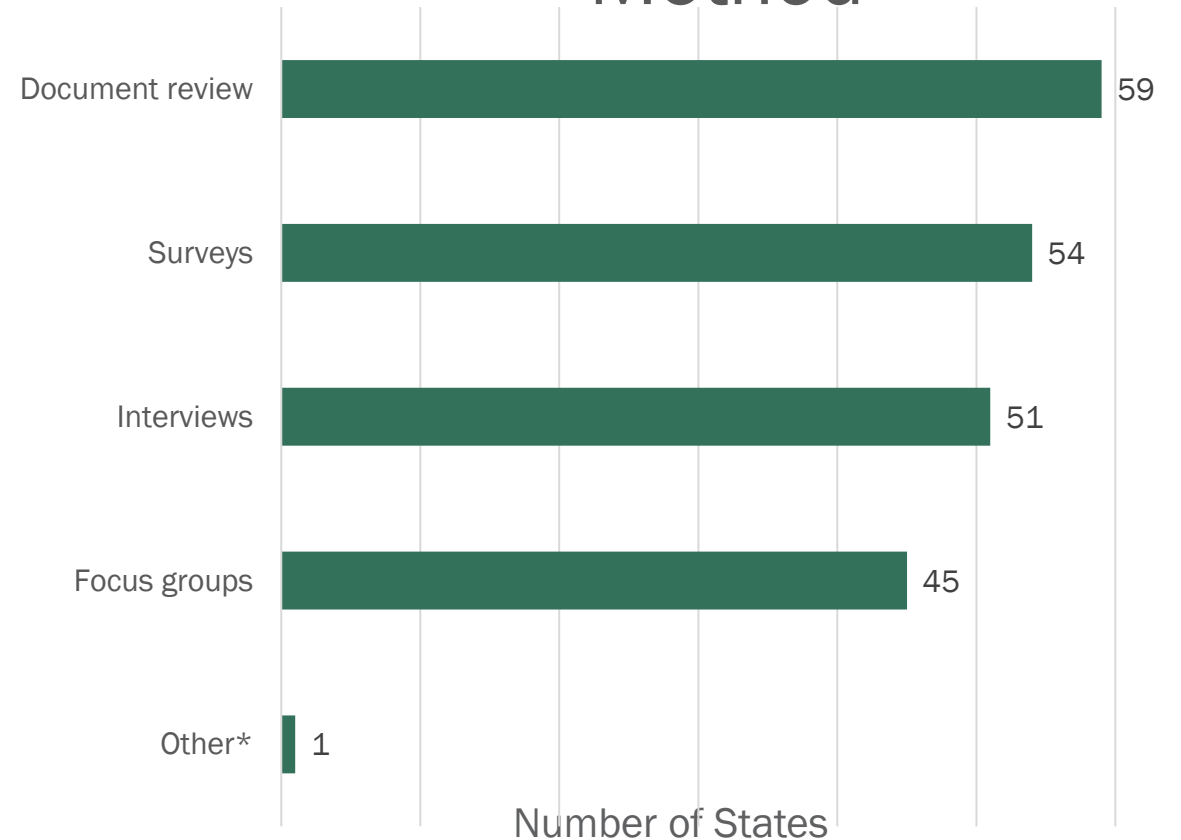
Photos/videos



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)

- Home
- Projects
- User Reports
- Account Management
- Help
- SPR Data Export**

- 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



At-a-Glance SPR Data (charts)



Grants to States Program Report -- SLAA View

Teri DeVoe [Logout]

Home

Projects

User Reports

Account Management

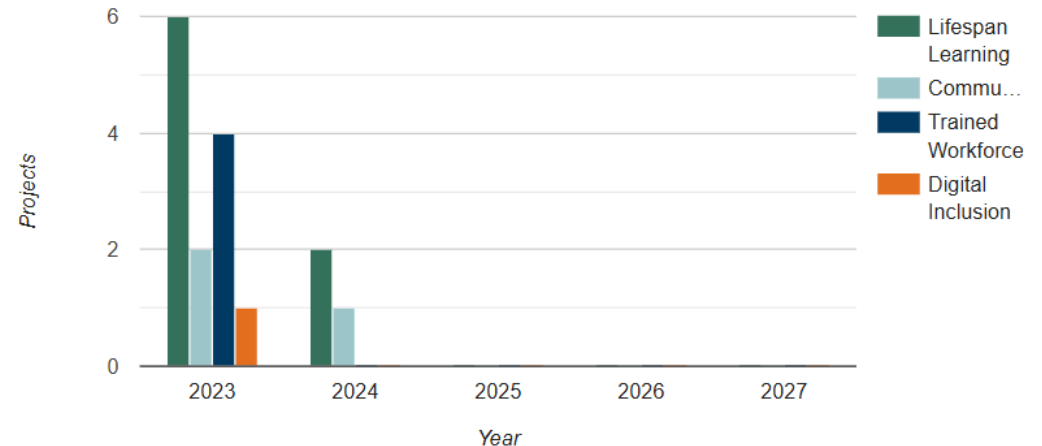
State Library Dashboard

The purpose of the State Program Report (SPR) is to provide a record of grant-funded projects, collect information on project outcomes, and share promising practices. IMLS uses these data to report to Congress and the Office of Management and Budget about the agency's progress on addressing its strategic goals which focus on learning, community, and content.

- Scroll down your SPR Dashboard page for four charts on goal progress



State Goals: Number of Projects by Year



SPR Entry to Eval Community of Practice



Grants to States Program Report -- SLAA View

Teri DeVoe  [Logout]

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Select a fiscal year:

You don't have any new alerts.

[click here to enter the evaluation community of practice.](#)

- If your evaluator doesn't have SPR credentials, please send their email to Lisa Hechtman (lhechtman@imls.gov), and we'll set them up in the CoP system.



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 “approving” them
- IMLS has 90 days (April-June 2027) to finish reviewing all five-year evaluations
- IMLS will send official letters of acceptance

- See example evaluations from last cycle:

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

Questions?