



CARES Act & ARPA Evaluation Results

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COVID-19 Emergency Funding

- In 2020 and 2021, IMLS distributed funds to SLAAs from two pandemic response and relief efforts:
 - Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security: **CARES Act**
 - American Rescue Plan Act: **ARPA**
- Expended \$200,974,862 across both grant programs

	CARES Act	ARPA
Total expended value	\$29,785,659	\$171,189,203
Total number of projects	476	1,629
Total number of subawards	3,565	6,106

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Evaluation Background

- Contracted with the American Institutes of Research (AIR) to address four evaluation topics:
 1. COVID-19 Needs, Goals, and Impacts
 2. Sustainability
 3. Equity
 4. Lessons Learned



Evaluation Methodology

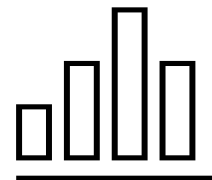
1. Semi-Structured Interviews:

- 4 Grants to States Program Officers
- 34 SLAA Representatives



2. Quantitative Data Analysis:

- Records from the IMLS State Program Report (SPR) System and other administrative records



3. Literature Review



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Background Findings

Funding Reach and Use

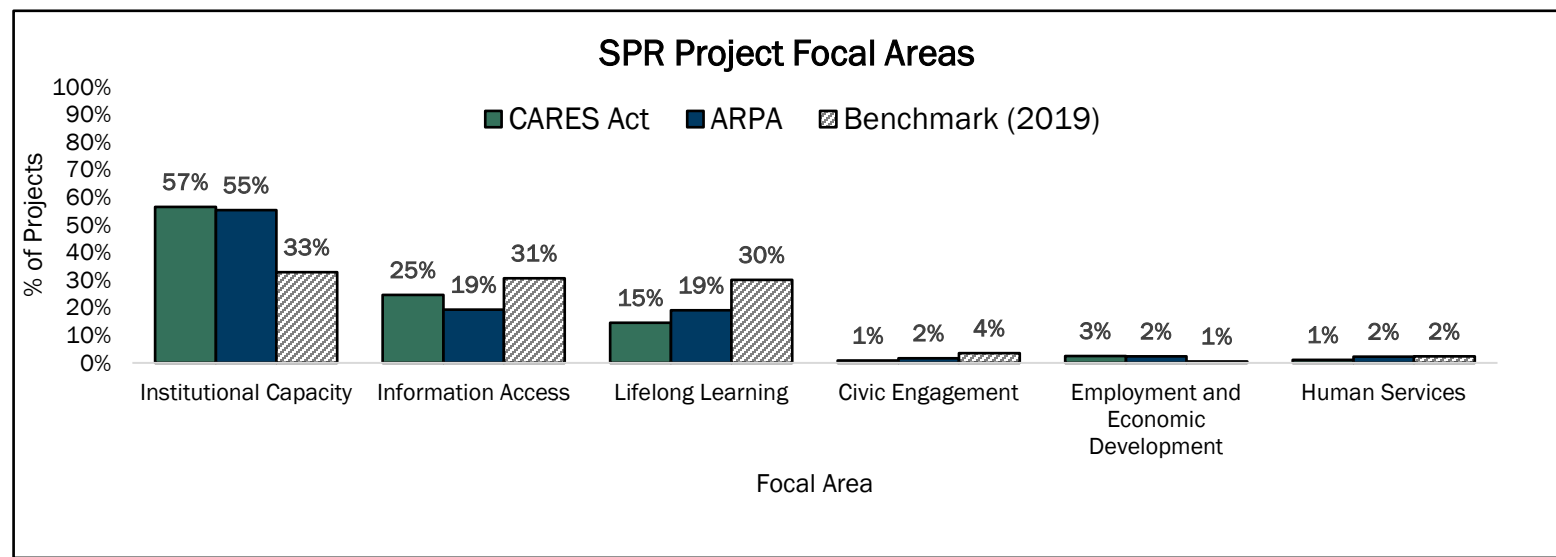
Background - Funding Reach

- Across the two programs, funding reached more than:
 - **40,000 libraries**
 - **350 museums**
 - **80 tribal institutions**
- Made over 9,000 subawards

	CARES Act	ARPA	Benchmark 2019
Total expended value	\$29,785,659	\$171,189,203	\$153,962,149
Total number of subawards	3,565	6,106	2,125
Average per SLAA	51.3	103.5	36.0

Funding Use – SPR Focal Areas

- **Benchmark Year (2019):** Funds split relatively evenly between Institutional Capacity, Information Access, and Lifelong Learning
- **CARES/ARPA:** Shift towards spending on Institutional Capacity, driven by projects related to improving libraries' physical and technology infrastructure (next slide)



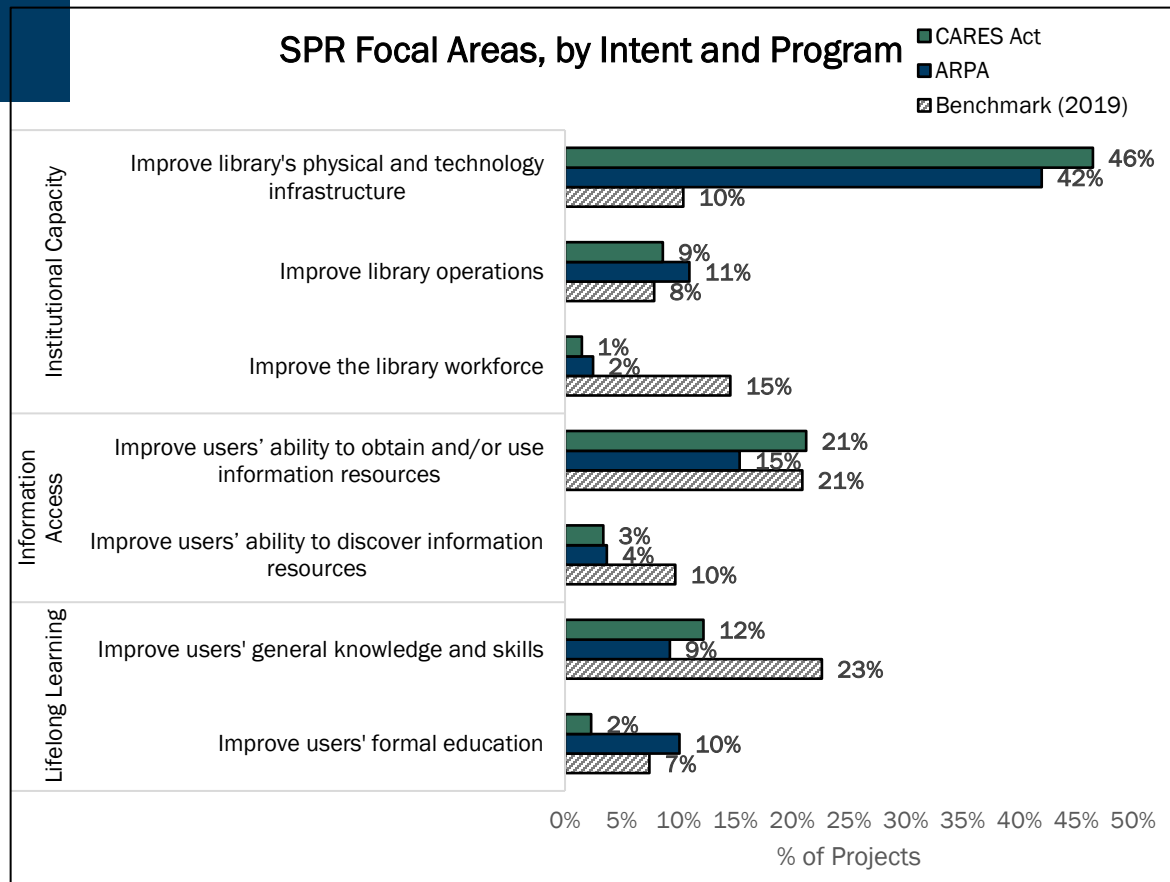
Funding Use – SPR Intents

- **COVID Increases:**

- Physical and technology infrastructure

- **COVID Decreases:**

- Improve library workforce
- Improve users' general knowledge and skills
- Improve users' ability to discover information resources



Funding Use– COVID vs. Benchmark

SPR Intent	COVID vs. Benchmark (% of projects; percentage point difference)
Improve library's physical and technology infrastructure.	+34%
Improve library operations.	+2%
Improve users' ability to use resources and apply information for employment support.	+2%
Improve users' ability to use and apply business resources.	0%
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal, family or household finances.	0%
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal or family health & wellness.	0%
Improve users' ability to converse in community conversations around topics of concern.	-1%
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their parenting and family skills.	-1%
Improve users' formal education.	-1%
Improve users' ability to participate in their community.	-1%
Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources.	-3%
Improve users' ability to discover information resources.	-6%
Improve users' general knowledge and skills.	-12%
Improve the library workforce.	-13%

Pandemic Needs

Findings

Needs as Pandemic Progressed

Early Pandemic

- **Conditions:**
 - Questions about the safety of using physical materials
 - Library closures
- **Key Needs:**
 - Transfer programming to virtual formats
 - Digitize collections
 - Develop digital products

Later Pandemic

- **Conditions:**
 - Reduced closures
 - Libraries recognize necessity of virtual elements
- **Key Needs:**
 - Provide virtual resources and increased access to them
 - Increase safety of in-person operations
 - Provide outdoor and community-focused programming



“We’re Open” Library Sign
Image Source: Allegheny County Library System (MD)

Needs – Physical Safety

- Most common purchases:

- PPE
- Masks
- Curbside services
- Hand sanitizer
- Plexiglass/plastic shielding
- Self-check services

- Shift as in-person activities resumed:

- Air purifiers
- Bookmobiles
- Lockers
- Self-checkout services

Physical Safety Item	Percentage of Projects		
	CARES Act	ARPA	Benchmark (2019)
Personal Protective Equipment	7%	1%	0.4%
Masks	8%	8%	1%
Curbside Services	5%	3%	3%
Hand Sanitizer	5%	2%	0.1%
Plexiglass	4%	1%	0.4%
Self-Check Services	2%	3%	1%
Contactless Services	2%	2%	0.2%
Lockers	1%	2%	0.3%
Bookmobiles	1%	2%	2%
Air Purifiers	1%	2%	0.0%
Modular Furniture	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%

Needs – Digital Access

- SLAAs prioritized increasing access to broadband internet and internet-connected technologies
 - Libraries purchased laptops for community residents to check out, increasing access to education, employment, communication, health, legal, and recreation services
 - Many libraries improved access to the internet through hotspots and parking lot Wi-Fi
- SLAAs Purchased:

	CARES Act	ARPA
Wi-Fi Hotspots	7,863	7,758
Other Technology (e.g., laptops, tablets)	7,943	19,141



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Funding Impacts

Findings

Impact Examples – Digital Access

- The Connecticut State Library
 - Distributed 225 laptops and 225 hotspots to fifteen different libraries:
 - *“Two students earned their high school diplomas.”*
 - *“This lending program has enabled participants to access websites... where they could file for unemployment benefits and access employment service assistance.”*
 - *“Borrowers can access telehealth and arrange medical services. 24-hour access to the internet provides many benefits to individuals who cannot afford to pay for internet services”* (LaValle, 2021)
- The South Carolina State Library (SCSL)
 - Helped public libraries and local schools meet their needs by providing digital network access, internet accessible devices, and technical support services
 - *“...four students finished their studies and graduated with the help of the hotspots, including students who graduated from nursing school”* (Aiken, 2021)



Library Hot Spots: Check Out the Internet!
Image Source: Montana State Library

**“Navigators helped Californians with all aspects of digital inclusion, such as digital literacy and finding low cost or free internet access and internet connected devices.”
(W. Walker, 2022)**

Impact Examples – Mobile Services

- Libraries expanded their mobile services, increasing their reach and bringing library services to vulnerable populations across their communities

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction used their **bookmobile to deliver books and food to patrons unable to travel to their local library** (DPI Media Line, 2022)

The Mandel Public Library (FL) equipped a **mobile van with Wi-Fi hotspots and laptops for checkout**, nutritious snacks, and **library staff offering help with homework, tutoring, job applications, resumes, and more** (Doris, 2020)



New Mexico State Library Bookmobile
Image Source: New Mexico State Library

Impacts – New and Expanded Opportunities

- Continuing modified services
- Using physical space to benefit the community
- Providing mobile services



Direct Access To Resources and Technology (DART) Van
Image Source: Jackson County Library District (OR)



Impacts – New Partnerships

- Every SLAA described working with state, local, and nonprofit agencies/organizations to provide unprecedented support for their states
- Partnerships focused on:
 - Unemployment
 - Workforce
 - Tax preparation
 - Education
 - Health
 - And dozens of other examples

Examples: Partnerships With:

- **Local distillery:** procuring alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- **Courthouses:** providing book machines
- **Department of Commerce:** develop an online high school program
- **Substance-abuse nonprofit:** donate books
- **Private academic libraries:** share bibliographic data
- **Other state agencies:** fund a standard electronic grants management system
- **Other state agencies:** improve early childhood education and workforce development

Impacts – New SLAA Practices



- SLAAs relied on virtual meetings more often
 - Shared changing rules and regulations related to COVID-19 with libraries within their states
- SLAAs have continued using virtual communication methods, which has allowed some libraries to overcome barriers to participation
- Several SLAAs:
 - Implemented DEAI and other virtual training for their staff

Impacts – New Policies

- SLAA Representatives reported new policies such as:
 - Changing sub-granting policies
 - Increasing acceptance of electronic signatures
 - Creating a digital equity plan



Equity Plan: Achieving Digital Equity in New York
Image Source: New York State Library



Questions so far?

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Sustainability

Findings



Sustainability – What activities...

Have Ended or Been Reduced

- PPE/Safety equipment distribution
- Wi-Fi hotspot and database subscriptions
- Virtual, outdoor, and community focused programming

Have Continued

- Hybrid programming
- Purchased equipment use (e.g., technology)
- Community-based programming through partnerships
- Offerings for individuals with disabilities, speakers of languages other than English

Need More Funding

- Expanded Wi-Fi and Hotspots
- Digital literacy services, Navigator programs
- Virtual and community-focused programs requiring staff/resources

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Equity

Findings

Equity Findings

- **Formula funding approaches:** incorporated socioeconomic variables such as unemployment rates, poverty rates, and broadband access

Program Officers Noted

- Many projects served historically less-well served communities
- Differences between states affected the equitable funding distribution, e.g.,:
 - State size
 - State political climate
 - Libraries' earlier experience applying for grants

SLAA Representatives Noted

- DEAI debates
- Considered various characteristics when distributing funds, including:
 - Community needs, library programmatic needs
 - Geographic distribution
 - Need for PPE for public safety
 - Local and regional demographic statistics
- Mix of cities, suburbs, and rural areas made it challenging to balance state needs

Equity Examples

One SLAA's formula factored in U.S. Census data, state-specific demographic data, and statewide broadband access

One SLAA directed funds toward communities with low internet connectivity and/or locations with higher poverty rates

Lessons Learned

Findings

Funding Structure – Challenges

Challenges (Noted by Program Officers)

Timing

Funding Amount

State-Level Bureaucratic Challenges

Staff Turnover and/or Shortages

Library Capacity for Fulfilling Grant Requirements

Supply Chain Issues

Grant Allowances

Challenges (Noted by SLAAs)

SLAA Operational Challenges

Strict Spending Timelines

Complicated Government Processes

Funding and Allocation Approval

Legislator Scrutiny

Grant Allowances

Funding Structure - Benefits

Benefits

Choice in how to expend funds

Volume/flexibility of funding supported libraries' unprecedented needs

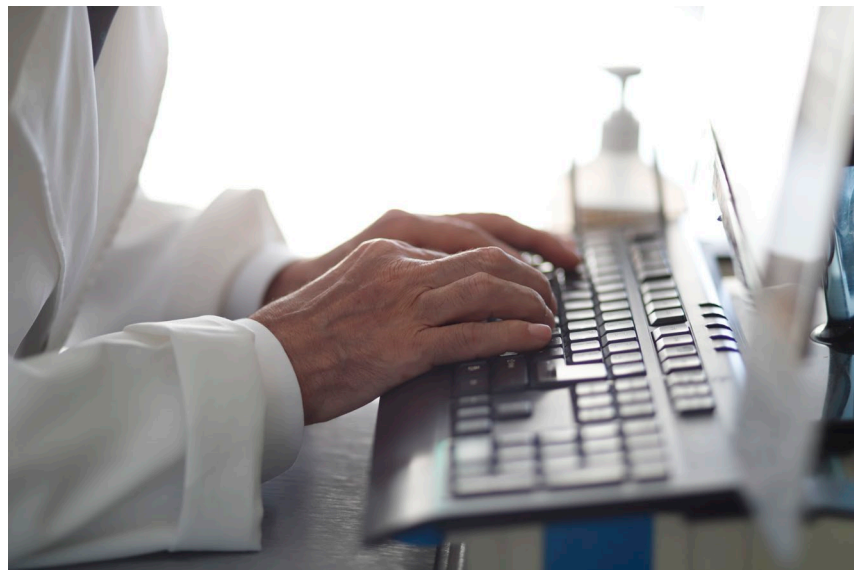
Flexibility aligned with digital inclusion needs



CARES Act Community Services Project
Image source: Guam Public Library System

The SLAA Experience (1)

- Weight of supporting libraries:
 - *“Some SLAAs reported feeling as if they were mere conduits for providing funding to libraries”*
 - *“...most SLAAs reported that the doubling or even quadrupling of their usual funding allotments ... **doubled or quadrupled their workload.**”*
 - *“Staff were dealing with personal pandemic-related issues while simultaneously managing massive increases in their workloads.”*





The SLAA Experience (2)

- Despite challenges, SLAAs distributed funds efficiently, in productive collaboration with IMLS:
 - Although some SLAAs felt like conduits to provide funding to libraries, *“IMLS and SLAAs worked quickly to distribute the funding with an emphasis on equity. As a result, the CARES Act and ARPA formula grant programs provided funding to more than 40,000 libraries, 350 museums, and more than 80 tribal institutions.”*
 - *“Although SLAAs expressed some issues, they noted that... comparable grants were not as professionally managed as those offered by IMLS...”*
 - *“[SLAAs] felt that the increased reporting requirements and shorter time frames were not a detriment because of the thoughtfulness and structure that IMLS puts into its grant programs, which make them an asset to SLAAs and the library community.”*



Overcoming Challenges

- SLAA used several **strategies to distribute funds quickly**:
 - Formula-based approaches
 - Bulk procurement solutions
 - Moving grant management and distribution processes to digital format
 - Restructuring staff responsibilities to handle work increases due to the volume of subgranting
 - Allocating some administrative and purchasing responsibilities to regional library cooperatives

*“SLAAs such as the Vermont Department of Libraries, **which purchased bulk PPE to distribute to Vermont public and academic libraries**, chose to focus on formula-based subgrants and **worked to procure supplies and equipment in bulk instead of delegating the responsibility to smaller libraries and individual institutions**”*

Source: “Libraries Dept Awarded over \$2M in ARPA Funds by the Institute of Museum and Library Services,” 2021

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Conclusion



Findings Summary

1. Although SLAAs used different methods to distribute funds, they worked to achieve efficient and equitable distribution of funding.
2. SLAAs took advantage of the transition to the virtual environment to expand library access to SLAA meetings through digital teleconferencing platforms and virtual professional development opportunities.
3. Libraries modified existing programming and created new programming to meet community needs with emergency funding. Libraries worked to bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Although many libraries initially viewed new programming as a temporary response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many continue to offer programs and services created during the pandemic.



Thank You!

Questions?

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The research was completed by a team led by Matthew M. Sweeney, Ph.D., Patricia O'Brien, PMP, and Mahi Megra, MS.