**Five-Year Plan Webinar FAQ**

**Background:**

During summer and fall 2011, working groups from across the states identified six focal areas to aid in national and state level reporting: (1) lifelong learning, (2) human services, (3) employment and economic development, (4) civic engagement, (5) digitization, and (6) database services. IMLS recognizes that this work will require adjustments along the way and sees this as the first step in defining and refining focal areas to best fit the range of State Library Administrative Agency (SLAA) activities. Any proposed changes or alternative configurations will be vetted with the states, through progress reports and discussion.

**Question: What is the purpose behind mapping SLAA activities to focal areas?**

Answer: The next phase of the Measuring Success effort includes revising the State Program Report so that IMLS can better account for the wide range of activities in which (SLAAs) are engaged. The data currently provided in the SPR simply does not lend itself to consistent and reliable reporting of program investments and impacts at either the national or state level. Failure to adequately demonstrate how library programs and services funded by LSTA dollars serve the public good places the entire program in jeopardy.

**Question: Can you provide a description of the focal areas?**

Answer: Webinars and subsequent discussions highlighted the need to adjust the original focal areas to better reflect the full range of states’ activities, including technology-based efforts and “capacity-building” activities. In response, IMLS proposes the following:

**Lifelong Learning**. These activities can range from the provision of instructional information resources to direct instructional services delivered by libraries or in partnership with local entities with the goal of transferring knowledge or skills to advance educational aims.

Examples of lifelong learning activities include: traditional adult and family literacy programs; summer reading, early literacy initiatives. State development and partnership activity designed to improve instructional capabilities of local libraries can be reported here as well.

**Human Services**. These activities can range from the provision of instructional information resources to direct services, however these activities are focused on providing resources to remediate social problems and improve participants’ quality of life.

Examples of human service related activities include: parenting classes; certification programming for child development, health information services, 50+ programming, etc. State development and partnership activity designed to improve human services capabilities of local libraries can be reported here as well.

**Employment and Economic Development**. These activities address economic needs of individuals and communities.

Examples of employment and economic development service include: financial literacy resources and programming; employment training/resume building; business development/information centers. State development and partnership activity designed to improve improve instructional capabilities of local libraries should be reported here as well.

**Information Access** (This focal area encompasses two former focal areas: digitization and database services.)These activities broaden public access to content through the purchase or original development of information resources (e.g. databases, computer technology).

Examples of information access services include: Digitization activities; database activities; electronic reference; commercial reference services; eBooks/eAudio/eMusic; cataloging subscription services; interlibrary loan. State development and partnership activity designed to improve information access should be reported here as well.

**Library Capacity Building**: These activities aim atmodernizing existing libraries and/or supporting the development of sound policies, organizational structures, and effective methods of management and revenue development in order to improve the efficiency of library services.

Examples of library capacity building include: Certification of public libraries; facilities/personnel consultation; CE/Staff Development (where such training cannot be differentiated into other targeted focal areas); and planning and needs assessments.

**Question: Should a single project be linked to one focal area?**

Answer: Yes. One of the major problems with current SPR reporting is that activities are linked to multiple priorities making it difficult to summarize and consistently compare/contrast library services and programs across the states. Linking each SLAA activity to one discrete focal area will allow us to focus future reporting using a suite of administrative inputs, target beneficiaries, and project outputs and outcomes.

**Question: Where does staff professional development fit?**

Answer: The revised focal areas allow SLAAs to report CE activity either as part of a state’s effort to improve conditions within a given focal area or as part of their general library capacity building work.

**Question: How is IMLS expecting us to report on the 6 focal areas? Are they going to be in the annual report, which adds yet another area for reporting and increases workload at a time we're struggling to keep or replace staff?**

Answer: IMLS is committed to reducing the reporting burden by the states. The work we are doing now will provide the foundation for a new reporting framework that will be developed with input from the SLAAs. Our initial proposal is to have states identify activities for each of the focal areas and then report the resources (human and financial), target beneficiaries, and corresponding outputs and outcomes.

**Question: How should outcomes be incorporated into our new LSTA Five-Year Plans or is inclusion of outcomes premature given the work IMLS is doing?**

Answer: It is too early in the planning process to specify what this might entail, especially given the diversity of activities across the states. We will focus on developing a set of agreed upon metrics around common outcomes after reviewing the states’ five-year plans.

**Questions: Do we need to develop separate evaluatory mechanisms for each focal area? Are the evaluation tools for the focal areas known at this time? Should we be thinking about tools for the final evaluation?**

Answer: The process has not yet reached the point where we know what these tools specifically entail. Once we have developed a basic reporting framework for LSTA activities, we will move forward with the states to identify common reporting metrics. In many cases these metrics will simplify the reporting requirements found in the current SPR by changing free text fields to close-ended response options.

**Statement: Remember, IMLS annual report requirements have a direct impact on how states manage their paperwork, especially for competitive grants or subgrants.**

Response: We recognize that IMLS reporting requirements impact how SLAAs manage their paperwork and we are working closely with our state partners to improve LSTA reporting protocols.

**Statement: Each IMLS change makes for changes on our end and vetting/approval by our legal and other state agencies that guide/control how funds are distributed and made accountable for within federal guidelines. Thanks!**

Response: Again, we recognize that changes in the reporting process for the LSTA program can have an impact on the states. The changes in reporting resulting from this process should not have an impact on how programs are planned or delivered within each state. Rather, the changes will affect how activities are reported in better demonstrating the value of library services for the American public.

**Question: Where can I find the paper that was distributed to COSLA in October and April?**

Answer: The “Measuring Success Update” is available on the LSTA extranet at:

[**http://stateprograms.imls.gov/manual/COSLA%20Measuring%20Success%20Update\_April%202012.pdf**](http://stateprograms.imls.gov/manual/COSLA%20Measuring%20Success%20Update_April%202012.pdf)

**Question: Do you have a matrix form we should follow in our plans?**

Answer: Yes, IMLS has developed an example of a cross-walk to assist in mapping activities to the focal areas. The cross-walk is meant to serve as a guide. We encourage you to contact your program officer or Matt Birnbaum at (202) 653-4760 or [mbirnbaum@imls.gov](mailto:mbirnbaum@imls.gov) to discuss this process if you have any questions.

**Question: I understood from the Ideafest two weeks ago that states could further narrow down the focal areas into possibly as few as two. Has that changed?**

Answer: Please note that the Ideafest activity is unrelated to IMLS’ work with the states to develop a consistent measurement framework for LSTA. IMLS was not involved in the planning or implementation of Ideafest.

**Question: Will you provide written guidance about everything that was requested in this call/webinar? Many of us work with outside groups who will want to know why we are adding something to a process that we’ve been working on for months?**

Answer: This FAQ responds to requests from the webinar. There is no formal requirement to include the mapping in the five-year plan.

**Question: What exactly are states supposed to do in mapping activities to focal areas?**

Answer: SLAAs that choose to participate should identify a focal area for each activity in their plan. If a state submits their plan without mapping activities to focal areas, IMLS will undertake the process after the plan is submitted (deadline for submitting plans remains June 30th).

**Question: Are states supposed to create new results chains for each activity listed in their plan?**

Answer: No. The only results chains needed were those created earlier in the Measuring Success initiative to establish the focal areas. States need only identify which focal area is associated with each activity outlined in their five year plan.

**Question: Should the information that links an activity to a focal area be included in the state’s formal plan or as an addendum to the plan?**

Answer: The SLAA may choose where to include this information.

**Question: If a State recommends that an activity be listed with a specific focal area, but this subsequently gets changed as the Measuring Success initiative progresses, does this mean that the State will have to submit an amendment to its plan?**

Answer: No. Only if a state changes a goal must an amendment be submitted.