



Further Guidance on the FY 2008-2012 “Five-Year” Evaluation Reports from SLAAs

The Baltimore conference (March 14-16, 2011) began a two-year transition to new procedures for Grants to States five-year evaluations that respond better to the needs of federal and state government policy makers in this period of high budget deficits and even greater concern for taxpayers. As the current guidance document distributed in Baltimore states, a major objective of this 2008-2012 five-year evaluation cycle is to help our state library partners make the transition to meet these new evaluation needs. This document is intended to clarify how the reports due on March 30, 2012, fit into this two-year transition.

Why Are We Developing New Evaluation Protocols?

The new IMLS reauthorization identifies eight priorities for LSTA funds and continues the requirement that state library administrative agencies (SLAAs) submit five-year evaluation reports and five-year plans. In the past, IMLS has not found it possible to combine data from across the states' reports to tell a compelling national story about the impact of LSTA funding and library services. In response, and with your help, IMLS is developing new evaluation protocols to provide stronger short- and long-term data, especially for outcomes related to public well-being associated with LSTA funding.

When Will New Evaluation Protocols Be Complete?

The new evaluation protocols will be developed in overlapping increments. The first phase began at the Baltimore conference. It will continue through September 2011, when the plan for the new evaluation protocols is finalized. This first phase includes input from all states. Phase 2 is the pilot phase and will begin in summer 2011 and continue through September 2012. Twelve states have already volunteered to serve as pilots, including testing the capabilities of a new federal grants information system. The final phase will transition all SLAAs to the new LSTA five-year evaluation protocols. This last phase will include the five-year evaluation reports due in March 2012 and the five-year plans due in June 2012. All SLAAs are expected to begin using the new grants information system sometime in the fall of 2012. The last major revisions of the protocols and the associated reporting system will be made by March 2013.

How Does the Transition to the New Evaluation Protocols Impact the Upcoming Five-Year Evaluation Report?

In developing guidance for the five-year evaluation reports due in March 2012, IMLS staff reviewed the federal reauthorization and considered how to use these evaluations to help SLAA partners transition to new evaluation protocols. The guidelines are intended to tighten consistency of reports across the SLAAs and to better enable IMLS to tell a national story about the impact of LSTA-funded activities on national public well being. The new protocols are also intended to help SLAAs tell the LSTA story within their jurisdictions.

The upcoming five-year evaluations should follow the current guidelines distributed in Baltimore, and should address three key content areas:



- highlight effective past practices (“Retrospective Questions”);
- identify processes at work in current SLAA plans, including the use of performance-based measures in planning, policy making and administration (“Process Questions”); and
- develop key findings and recommendations to inform the next five-year plans (“Prospective Questions”).

Evaluations should use the resources recommended in the current guidelines to provide concrete, substantive information to meet this requirement.

How can SLAAs follow up with IMLS for further questions?

A webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, April 12, to answer any questions and issues. IMLS is creating a new wiki that will include a page for individuals to post questions about their evaluations as well as provide a place for IMLS to post additional documents to help SLAA partners. Please stay tuned for more details. If more information is needed immediately, please contact your IMLS program officer or Matt Birnbaum, Evaluation Officer at mbirnbaum@imls.gov or 202-653-4760.

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