Nevada State
Library Services and Technology Act
Five-Year Evaluation Report
2008 to 2012

Final Report

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Nevada State Library and Archives
by REAP Change Consultants
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EVALUATION SUMMARY

This evaluation addresses program areas within the four goals of the LSTA State Plan that were developed to align with federal LSTA purposes. The programs evaluated are the Statewide Reading Programs, Statewide Electronic Database Program, Digital Initiative and Projects, Talking Books Program, and the Competitive Grants Program. Significant evaluation questions focused on whether the programs met goals of the state plan, and the extent to which they benefited libraries and their clientele. The report examines program impact, client satisfaction, outreach to target groups, and effectiveness in reaching user groups. For the competitive grant program, the evaluation looks at the staff satisfaction and awareness of the grant process, as well as what libraries need to be able to participate. The analysis also investigates challenges to outcomes-based evaluation, and how data from this analysis can be used to help formulate the next five-year plan.

An overall consideration for this evaluation is that in 2008, at the beginning of the evaluation period, the United States entered the worst recession since the Great Depression, and Nevada has been one of the hardest hit and slowest to recover states. This has especially affected federal, state, and local budgets and led to budget cuts, layoffs, staff attrition without replacement, staff shortages, and reductions in library hours and services.

This was not a period of "business as usual plus LSTA funding on top." For example, when attending an LSTA Grant Application workshop in Henderson, Nevada an evaluator noticed that the Friends of the Library group was attempting to raise $1 million of private funds to help offset a 30% decline in Henderson Public Libraries funding since 2008. Although the Nevada economy is improving slightly at present libraries in Nevada can expect a difficult fiscal environment during the beginning of and perhaps throughout the next five-year LSTA evaluation period.

While serious, the cuts in this period affected library clerical staff more than librarians, which may mean that librarians took on more tasks previously delegated to aides. As a result they might have had less time available to serve library patrons.

Annex D has a more complete description of the federal and state context of the 2008 to 2012 evaluation.

Methodology

This evaluation included multiple data collection and analytic tools that differed across program areas. Details on specific methods are explained in program report sections. These methods included:

- Interviews with Nevada State Library and Archives (NSLA) staff, members of the State Council on Libraries and Literacy (SCLL), librarians, representatives of museum and other cultural heritage institutions (CHI).

- Focus groups conducted during the Nevada Library Association (NLA) 2011 meeting.

- Review of results of patron surveys done by NSLA before the evaluation.
- Observation of an LSTA applicant training workshop in Henderson, Nevada.
- Visits to LSTA-funded program sites at NSLA (Talking Books Operations and Recording Programs) and the LSTA sub-grant funded Business Resource Information Center (BRIC) project in Carson City.
- Attendance at presentations made at the Nevada library Association (NLA) 2011 conference on two LSTA sub-grant funded projects.
- Online surveys concerning the LSTA Sub-grants Program and the Statewide Electronic Databases Program that were created by the evaluation team and analyzed using SPSS software.
- Review and analysis of available grant applications, rankings, six-month, annual, and funding reports for 2008 through 2011.
- Review and analysis of Nevada and national documents related to the library context since 2008 and the impact since the start of the 2008 national recession on libraries across the country and in Nevada.
- Review and analysis of school enrollments, U.S. Census Bureau data, Nevada State Demographer statistics on public library service area population estimates by library/district/system, Nevada Department of Education statistics, and Nevada Public Library Survey data on public libraries.

Limitations of the data

The Competitive Grants Program Survey garnered a lower response rate than expected, especially from grant program nonparticipants and individuals who had left Nevada librarianship. The Electronic Databases Survey had a response rate of 240 respondents out of 648 (37%) with the responses skewed toward Clark County and school and public librarians (90%) and school librarians. Responses from more rural counties were limited although sometimes the only public librarian in a rural area did respond. Results for both surveys were non-random and cannot reliably be generalized to the entire population.

Vendor-provided usage statistics are typically difficult to compare. The usage reported varied by 2011 time period, and by metric covered (searches, session, page views, documents retrieved). Because of four contracts and budget shortfalls, database availability also varied between 2008 and 2011.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Statewide Reading Programs

Participation in reading programs and circulation of children's materials increased over the review period, although the overall number of programs decreased 30%. Program staffs continued to make use of Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP) materials which provided cost-effective promotional materials and program activities. Participant survey data indicated high levels of patron satisfaction. Outcome evaluation presented challenges as some libraries did not have adequate resources to collect and analyze evaluation data. Library staff noted that changes in reading proficiency, interest, and associated longer term impacts were also difficult to isolate and measure during the typical 6- to 10-week summer reading program.

Recommendation:

- Although staff regarded NSLA training very highly, many requested additional training on developing relevant survey instruments and analytical tools. Some ready-to-use survey tools and resources are available on the Library Research Service website (http://www.lrs.org/usersurveys.php) and in the InfoPeople webinar archives (http://infopeople.org/training/view/webinar/archived).

Statewide Electronic Databases Program

Electronic database usage generally increased for all libraries, especially school and academic libraries. School library use generally exceeded public library use. However, some public and school library districts had little, no, or declining database use since 2008. On the other hand, in some school districts overall database use increased for certain databases even though school enrollment declined. Remote access helped offset reduced service hours, but library patrons had to know about and be interested in the databases offered, the library had to have a portal set up, and patrons needed computers with internet access at home or work and to know how to access the databases remotely.

Public library budgets favored print serials collections over database use, and public libraries depended more and more on statewide databases between 2008 and 2010. Survey results indicated that librarians overall valued availability of statewide databases, especially school and academic librarians. Annex F provides examples of favorable library patron reactions to the databases. However, librarians expressed a need for more training in database content and use in order to provide better service to patrons.

Recommendations:

- Continue using LSTA funds to leverage state funds in providing electronic database access, which is well-received when used and increasing in use for most vendors.

- Review interest of public library patrons in specific databases offered by vendors.

- Consider using LSTA funds to develop new outreach approaches regarding database use in local communities.

- Review ways to increase usage in low use public libraries. Consider cost effectiveness, equity issues, librarian and patron interest in databases in public libraries and local fiscal/staffing circumstances.

- Seek ways to provide training in electronic database content and use to librarians, especially in rural areas, so that they can better work with patrons. Librarians surveyed favored in-person training, although this may not be feasible for budgetary and staffing reasons.

Digital Initiative and Projects

Substantial progress has been made toward achieving the goals of the LSTA-funded Nevada Statewide Digital Plan 2008-2014, culminating in the launch of the pilot Nevada Digital Collections Portal, which provides open access to 17 digital collections from a variety of libraries, museums, and archives across Nevada. A statewide survey of cultural heritage institutions (CHI) in Nevada collected valuable baseline data describing the Nevada digital landscape. Focused planning efforts by the Nevada Statewide Digital Advisory Committee (NSDAC) resulted in detailed action items to provide infrastructure and a shared vision, best practices and standards, training and research to raise awareness and technological skills on digitization, and opportunities for partnerships.

Recommendation:

- NSDAC should reconvene to assess strategies for meeting plan goals in balance with staffing capacity in participating organizations, and continue to encourage participation from more organizations and contribution of digital collections accessible via the portal.

Statewide Talking Books Program

The LSTA grant in combination with state funds provided support essential to the continued success and development of the Nevada Talking Book Services (NTBS) for the benefit of qualifying individuals with visual and physical disabilities. In 2010 the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey found that approximately 2% of the noninstitutionalized population of Nevada reported a visual disability. In effect, 51,021 (± 6,438) Nevadans with self-reported visual difficulties could be NTBS clients out of an estimated state base population of 2,668,966 (±1,868). [1] To qualify for the program their visual difficulty would have to be verified by medical personnel.

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[1] U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, S1810, Disability Characteristics, Universe: Civilian noninstitutionalized population. 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Available from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml using a topical search for "people,

With about 1,320 active NTBS clients in October 2011, NTBS operations were serving only a small portion of its possible clients among the Nevadans with visual difficulties. The operations effort has not been well-focused during part of the evaluation period because of staff turnover, and had fewer clients in 2011 than in 2008. Furthermore, NTBS statistics and a recent survey of its clients indicated that recent NTBS operations were focused primarily on the elderly and the very aged while the visually impaired population was concentrated in greater numbers among the middle-aged (35 to 64) and young adult (18 to 34) populations, according to 2010 American Community Survey disability data. Some areas, such as Carson City, Washoe and Douglas counties were very well-served in relation to their proportion of the visually disabled, and most counties appeared to receive their fair share of service. While Clark County had both the greatest number of NTBS clients and the most need, it was underserved in relation to its proportion of the overall population of people with visual disabilities.

Talking Book Recording continued to provide a valuable service in recording Nevada authors but had relatively low output and two underused recording booths. The transfer from analog to digital recording was progressing with implications for future space use in the NSLA located recording storage area. This transition introduced both challenges and opportunities in relation to current and potential future clients of NTBS. Not all of the current clients were comfortable with digital format Talking Books although the young adult and middle-aged adults who could be better served may prefer the digital format.

Recommendations:

Develop an outreach plan to increase number of users and to provide access equity by age and county, and use metrics adaptively to manage outreach in balance with staff capacity and to optimize staff effectiveness.

Concurrently, develop a service plan to meet the potential needs and uses of the NTBS program by all clients of all ages.

Proactively manage space assets as Talking Books are transitioned to digital format.

Competitive Grants Program

Over time the competitive grant applications have addressed all four goals of the LSTA five-year plan. Librarians knew about the competitive grants program and almost all considered the process to be working well and fairly. The two types of training being offered were exceptionally well-received, and librarians praised the LSTA Coordinator for her training skills and overall helpfulness. The electronic proposal and application submittal was appreciated when it worked well. Applicants in remote areas appreciated being able to be present remotely via telephone or videoconferencing during State Council on Libraries and Literacy (SCLL) application review.

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disabilities" selecting S1810 "Disability Characteristics" dataset, 2010 ACS 1-Year Estimates and a geographic selection of "State" and "Nevada".

The reasons that libraries did not apply related more to local circumstances such as staff turnover without replacement, staff availability to do a project, lack of time or local budget, rather than to matters that NSLA could control. In the current austere fiscal climate it was difficult for head librarians to propose an LSTA-funded project to local funding authorities involving something new when there was not sufficient funding to support basic library service. It was not clear which activities previously funded by normal operational funds might be considered "new" and so eligible for LSTA funding. However, those libraries that did apply for LSTA funds reported that they could access local resources more easily because of the time-limited nature of grants.

While most librarians understood the difference between outputs and outcomes, they were not completely comfortable with outcomes-based evaluation or the time constraints for completing and reporting results. They would appreciate more extensive training in outcomes evaluation, grant writing, tracking, and reporting.

During the LSTA grants evaluation period some programs moved from being NSLA sub-grant proposals to being funded as part of non-competitive LSTA grants of statewide interest. NSLA staff indicated that these decisions to change the LSTA funding status were staff decisions. Some SCLL members interviewed were unsure why the changes had been made.

Recommendations:

- Continue the proposal, application and ranking process of the competitive grants program.
- Consider working with SCLL members to set minimum ranking levels above which proposals should be funded if LSTA funds are available, and below which proposals would not be funded, even if LSTA funds are available.
- Given the few Innovation grant applications and the current difficulties of finding matching funds review if that category is still needed.
- Provide more extensive outcomes-based evaluation training, with additional relevant examples and exercises with feedback.
- Consider how to involve more schools or school districts in applying for LSTA grants.
- Engage the SCLL in on-going reviews and discussions on revisions, reallocations and updates to the competitive sub-grant program.
- Consider engaging the SCLL in developing policies and review processes about when statewide initiatives should become non-competitive LSTA funded grant projects instead of being annual NSLA competitive sub-grant proposals.

A. STATEWIDE READING PROGRAM

Background

Statewide reading programs supported by LSTA funding are designed to support and encourage reading for Nevadans of all ages. These programs addressed issues of early literacy, English language learning, and family literacy, and continued to play a major role in fostering literacy skills, especially among preschool and elementary school children, and outreach to un-served and underserved members of the community.

In Nevada, support for literacy programs is needed now more than ever. The percentage of teens in poverty in Nevada rose from 13% to 18% between 2000 and 2009, a rise of 38%. Thirty-four percent of children currently live in homes where parents lack full-time work. In 2011, 74% of eighth graders were below proficient in reading achievement.[2] Nevada's overall unemployment rate in October 2011 was 13.4%, with the Las Vegas-Paradise Metropolitan Statistical Area at 13.1%.[3] In a state where the projected need for workers with at least some postsecondary education will grow by 50 % by 2014, only 50% of students complete high school and 26% enter college.[4]

Research has shown that access to summer reading programs helps prevent summer learning loss, and that these effects are more important for disadvantaged youth who fall significantly further behind in the summer months while children are out of school.[5] Preschool children who participate in summer reading show more emergent literacy behaviors and pre-reading skills than non-participants, vital for early literacy. Access to books is directly related to the amount of reading children do, and the number of books children read in the summer has been consistently related to academic gains.[6]

Evaluation questions

The activities involved with reading programs are intended to meet LSTA Goal #4: Assure equitable access to library and information services is available to all individuals including the un-served or underserved populations of the state.

This evaluation focused on three components of the Statewide Reading Program: the Summer Reading Program, El Dia de los Niños/El Dia de los Libros, and Nevada Reading Week conference training programs. The Summer Reading Program provided opportunities and encouragement for children to spend time reading as well as literacy-related activities designed to increase interest in books and reading. El Dia de los Niños/El Dia de los Libros was dedicated to encouraging Hispanic and other cultural groups in local

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[2] Kids Count, 2009 and 2011.
[3] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Economy at a Glance, http://stats.bls.gov/eag.nv_lasvegas_msa.htm. Accessed Dec. 14 and 15, 2011.
[4] WICHE, 2008; NCHEMS Information System, 2006.
[5] Alexander, Entwistle, & Olsen, 2007.
[6] Celano & Neuman, 2001.

communities to read and participate in library activities. The summer reading workshops and reading week conferences provided a welcome opportunity for library staff to attain learning on new programs, share ideas, and network.

Evaluation questions centered on the programs' impacts on consumers, the types of programs offered, and the challenges for libraries in developing and providing these programs.

Methodology

The methods for this analysis included review of program documents including LSTA grant documents, six-month and annual evaluation reports, State Program Reports, and customer surveys as available. The information in these documents was verified and supplemented with interviews with program personnel in 14 library jurisdictions. Information on reading programs was gathered from library and other related websites. The study team utilized existing evaluation criteria for summer reading programs that included measurement of program outputs such as attendance, analysis of program activities, and assessment of program outcomes on participants.

Limitations of study data include continued difficulty of measuring outcomes for the programs such as actual increases in reading and improvement in reading skills. These complex impacts can be affected by multiple factors, many of which are outside the local libraries' control. Although some libraries collected reading program evaluation data using surveys, most libraries in this study continued to rely on staff observation of participants and informal interviews with parents and local educators.

Findings

Statewide Reading Programs

LSTA sub-grants were awarded to public library jurisdictions to support local summer and year-round reading programs that met the needs of local populations. LSTA grants funded such reading programs for 12 public library jurisdictions in 2008, and to 10 public library jurisdictions in 2009. Summer reading provided an average of six to eight weeks of book reading and follow up activities for preschool children through high school readers. The programs often encouraged adults accompanying children to participate as well, encouraging family literacy. Reading program activities typically included reading, story times, puppet and magic shows, movies, crafts, games, and other activities designed to engage children in reading. With some fluctuation over time, reading program participation grew during the review period, reaching approximately 4% to 6% of all infants and children, and kept pace with school enrollment changes over the same period: [7]

[7] US Census Bureau, American Factfinder 2010; Nevada Education Factbook 2011.

Table 1. Summer reading participation, 2007-2010

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total summer reading participants	28,505	31,450	26,501	32,758
Total summer reading programs	3,721	3,763	4,724	2,598
Circulation of children's materials during summer reading	1,062,940	1,186,131	1,346,962	1,373,316

Source: Nevada Public Library Survey

Twelve of 22 library jurisdictions in the state participated in summer reading programs in this review: Amargosa Valley Library District, Boulder City Library District, Carson City Library, Douglas County Public Library, Elko-Lander-Eureka County Library System, Henderson District Public Libraries, Humboldt County Library, Lyon County Library, Pahrump Community Library District, Pershing County Library, Tonopah Library District, Washoe County Library, and White Pine County Library.

Collaborative Summer Library Program

LSTA support for summer reading made several fundamental components of reading programs available to participating libraries, including membership in the Collaborative Summer Library Program Association (CSLP), a grassroots consortium of states working together to provide high-quality summer reading program materials for children at low cost. CSLP works with a vendor to produce promotional materials, bookmarks, certificates, and an extensive manual of programming activities. In 2008, 61 manuals were distributed to 24 library jurisdictions or outlets; 41 manuals were distributed to 23 library jurisdictions or outlets in 2009.

Virtually all library staff members who made use of CSLP materials highly valued the membership. The manual provided a "huge advantage" with its array of ready-to-go program ideas, activities, booklists, and more. Access to top quality professional artwork for marketing the programs was essential for libraries to be able to get the word out to their communities in a cost effective manner, increase their visibility, and especially enhance the public image of the library as a quality venue. This type of support became more significant as libraries continued to experience reductions in staff and resources that limited their ability to develop, publicize, and support reading programs on their own. Descriptions of summer reading programs in libraries are provided in Annex E.

Summer Reading Program Workshop/Nevada Reading Week

LSTA funds supported the annual summer reading workshop held in the spring, and the Nevada Reading Week Conference, which provided essential training needed to build staff skills. Because of demographic characteristics of the rural areas throughout much of the state, programs were not often staffed by MLS-trained personnel. The 2008 SRP workshop featured training of 24 participants by the Henderson District Public Libraries staff who

used Reader's Theatre to enhance reading activities, art kits to implement the summer theme of Fine Arts, and music. Henderson District Public Libraries staff provided training to 16 participants in the 2009 workshop, which included orientation on using the summer reading kits and incorporating water science programs designed to help attract boys to the library. Other LSTA funds supported additional training provided at the Nevada Library Association Conference in the fall.

The Nevada Reading Week Conference is an annual two-day conference coordinated by the Washoe County School District for librarians and teachers that emphasizes encouraging students to read for pleasure as well as for information. NSLA provided LSTA funding to support various components of this conference, including funding for speakers, purchase and distribution of the manual of program activities and conference materials on flash drives, purchase of books by presenting authors and Nevada Young Readers Award authors for participating libraries. Most conference attendees were K-12 school librarians. In 2008 some 252 participants received manuals and program materials on flash drives; 247 received flash drives in 2009.

Staff in rural Nevada libraries highly valued reading program training. Participants appreciated the opportunity to share ideas, brainstorm on activities, and explore possibilities for cost-saving collaboration on author and performer visits. Rural libraries continued to be challenged by distance and time needed to travel, however, and many libraries were unable to send staff to training because of reductions in staffing. Suggestions included providing training via webinars, capturing training workshops on video to archive for later viewing, and investigating other online options.

El Dia de los Niños/El Dia de los Libros

LSTA funds helped support El Dia de los Niños/El Dia de los Libros celebrations each spring. Participating public libraries developed and implemented programs dedicated to celebrating books and reading in the Hispanic culture, including activities highlighting history, culture, geography, and arts of Latin countries. Some communities have expanded the celebration to include additional cultures represented in their own communities. There were 920 community members in four library districts in Nevada who participated in El Dia activities in 2008; 2,475 community members in seven library districts participated in 2009. Descriptions of El Dia activities are provided in Annex E.

Reading program outcomes evaluation

Outcomes for the reading programs, in terms of increases in reading and improvement in reading skills, continued to be difficult to isolate and measure. Staff preparation and capability to conduct outcomes evaluation varied across libraries. Most libraries relied on staff interaction with participants, parent observations of their children's interest in and enthusiasm for reading, and teachers' impressions of the impact of summer reading to assess the impact of its book and reading programs. The vast majority of these impressions were highly positive. The perception of library staff was that they achieved their intended outcomes to the extent that they could observe those outcomes.

Of 14 library jurisdictions reviewed in Fall 2011, all observed, counted, and talked with participants to gauge program quality and outcomes. Six libraries reported using surveys to gather information on participant satisfaction and/or other outcomes. These perceptions stressed the importance of maintaining reading skills over the summer break, an increase in interest in reading as demonstrated by children reading more as reported by parents. Parents also noted children's increased interest in the library as a place for fun activities, using the computers, and getting help with schoolwork.

A survey sent out to parents of summer reading participants in Henderson indicated that children in the program spent an average of 30 minutes a day reading, with some children reading as much as 300 minutes a day. Receiving a free book (provided with non-LSTA funding) was the greatest reading motivator for the great majority of children.

A number of libraries, such as White Pine County Library, periodically checked circulation statistics in topical areas covered in reading programs and typically found jumps in circulation immediately following programs, indicating increased reading interest.

Most library staffs felt they simply did not have time to develop survey tools, although they expressed interest in conducting surveys if data collection and analysis tools were available. Although the outcome evaluation training provided by NSLA was rated very highly by participants, additional in-depth training is desired.

Reaching underserved and unserved populations in the community

Hispanic and teen populations, and individuals and families in poverty were the most typically underrepresented groups identified by library staffs. Libraries reported both successes and continuing challenges in reaching these groups. Like many other library institutions, White Pine County Library worked with the local Head Start program, Family Resource Center, schools, and other local service agencies to meet the needs of low income families. Partnering with these agencies has been a key for helping all agencies maximize resources.

Large segments of populations in many communities were Spanish speakers: close to 30 % of the population in Clark County reported being of Hispanic or Latino origin, with 26% in Nevada overall (US Census 2010). Bilingual advertising in the schools, in the community, and in library newsletters were thus critical mechanisms for outreach to the Hispanic community. Significantly, El Dia de los Niños has become a focal event for outreach, with participating libraries reporting consistently high attendance at El Dia events and increases in subsequent library visits by Hispanic families and individuals. Staff at Humboldt County Library stated they would like to reach more of the Hispanics in the community with a Spanish storytime and develop other bilingual programs, but at this time and for the foreseeable future they were not developing any new programs because of staff and budget constraints. At the current time, outreach was done through local English as a Second Language (ESL) classes which provide time for library orientations and library card sign ups.

Many libraries have been able to increase teen involvement in reading programs by involving them in volunteer roles. In Henderson, Carson City, and other locations, teen volunteers helped during the summer with various tasks, including program sign in, supervising crafts and other activities, and reading to younger children. Some libraries had teen advisory groups to help plan and organize programs. During the school year teens have been involved with homework help programs, even serving as tutors in math, science, and reading for younger children. Programs with volunteer teens have been highly successful for the younger children, popular with teens, and greatly appreciated by parents.

Programming capacity gained through LSTA

The summer reading program support from LSTA did in fact provide opportunities to develop programming capacity. Building on the 2011 summer reading theme, Stories Around the World, Henderson District Public Libraries planned to develop programming kits for different countries, focusing on preschool through elementary grades. Since the library has already developed some of these resources, they will concentrate on adding to the book collections, especially in languages other than English, as well as developing new activities and program ideas. Kits such as these will become a lasting resource for the library's programs.

Certainly libraries were able to do much more programming and reach many more participants with LSTA support than without it. Funding enabled libraries to devote more time to developing new programs and to work closely with the schools. In White Pine, local elementary and middle schools have been without librarians for several years, and the public library has been able to work with teachers to provide support for information skills. White Pine County Library is currently developing an early job skills program geared to teens and young adults, to provide some knowledge and experience with basic skills needed for success in the workplace.

Recommendations

- As staff capacity permits, provide resources and training to establish a set of data collection tools for libraries, and additional training opportunities for staff to learn more about outcome evaluation techniques. Some ready-to-use survey tools and resources are available on the Library Research Service website (http://www.lrs.org/usersurveys.php) and in the InfoPeople webinar archives (http://infopeople.org/training/view/webinar/archived).

- As staff capacity permits, expand programming to reach more underserved populations.

B. STATEWIDE ELECTRONIC DATABASES PROGRAM

Background

NSLA used non-competitive LSTA funds to leverage state funds to expand provision of general periodical databases for use by public libraries, K -12 libraries, and academic libraries. The K-12 databases were supported only by state funds. LSTA funds and state funds worked in concert to leverage access to databases for libraries of different sorts throughout Nevada. Annex F lists specific databases provided by four vendors under NSLA contracts in two rounds.

Evaluation questions

LSTA Goal #1 applies to the Statewide Electronic Databases program: Residents of Nevada will have convenient access to current, reliable information through effective technology, resources and telecommunications. Four activities, three identified outputs and two outcomes were detailed in the 2008-2012 LSTA Plan. These are presented and discussed below.

Methodology

The evaluation draws on interviews with NSLA staff, and analysis of electronic database usage data from four vendors, including sessions and searches/logins, and other data for each vendor's databases. Quantitative review of database usage included analysis of trends and patterns of usage by vendor, for public and school library districts and academic libraries. Complete vendor data only became available for analysis in mid-November, 2011, limiting the time available for analysis and follow-up on results.

An online electronic database usage survey of librarians drew 240 responses for an overall response rate of 37%. Survey responses appeared to be skewed toward urban (50%) and suburban (35%) over rural libraries (10%). About 90% of all respondents worked at libraries in Clark County, 3% in Washoe County, 1% each in Elko County and Carson City, and 4% total across Churchill, Esmeralda, Humboldt, Lander, Lyon, Mineral, Nye, Pershing and Storey counties. The other skew in the data was toward responses by school librarians. The survey invitation often went to district offices first with instructions to have only the person who is best able to talk about electronic database usage respond. School librarians often work alone so if the survey invitation was forwarded from a school district office to a school, the lone school librarian in each school might well respond.

The large urban public libraries generally provided responses from only one librarian, as requested in the instructions. The instructions were intended to keep the opinions of librarians in the larger urban districts from predominating in the analysis, which might have occurred if one librarian per outlet was asked to respond. In smaller and rural libraries there might only be one librarian and so that would be the person who responded. While the voice of small and rural public libraries came out more strongly in the public librarian responses than would otherwise be the case, the survey results may not fully represent the range of urban public librarian and patron use of electronic databases.

Findings

LSTA 2008-2012 Plan Activity: Support the availability of electronic content and information for all Nevada residents through statewide negotiated subscriptions

The expended LSTA allotment for electronic database access totaled $387,478 in FY 2008 (plus a $339,599 state cash match, total $727,077 of federal and state monies) and $158,173 in 2009 (plus a $472,340 state cash match, total $630,513 of federal and state monies). NSLA requested $300,000 in LSTA funds in both 2010 and 2011 for electronic databases. The LSTA funding dropped from FY 2008 levels because less LSTA funds were awarded to Nevada due to federal budget cuts. The combined funding provided access to 30 databases in 2008, 40 databases in 2009 and 2010, and between 30 and 40 databases in 2011.

LSTA 2008-2012 Plan Metric – Output: Number of statewide electronic database sessions, searches and document retrievals by school and public libraries

The specific databases made available by four vendors, ABC-CLIO, EBSCO, Gale and Grolier online are listed in Annex F. Below is an overall summary of usage by vendor across all databases that each provided.

Overall ABC-CLIO logins or sessions increased 54% from 114,099 to 175,847 between 2008 and 2010, and totaled 171,060 during the first nine months of 2011. Page views went from 699,095 to 781,493 between 2008 and 2009. Beginning in September 2010 ABC-CLIO changed its counting methods and started to provide information on searches. There were 295,874 ABC-CLIO searches in the last four months of 2010, and 577,306 searches in the first nine months of 2011.

Overall in Nevada EBSCO database sessions increased 73% from 969,058 in 2008 to 1,681,239 in 2010. There were 1,199,787 sessions to date in 2011. The number of searches went up more slowly, 58% between 2008 and 2010, as the average number of EBSCO searches per session fell from 3.2 to 2.9, but in 2011 average searches per session were higher at 3.6. If that usage rate continues through the rest of the year the number of EBSCO searches in 2011 (4,350,511 to date) may surpass the 4,920,346 of 2010.

From 2008 to 2010 the overall number of Gale database sessions throughout Nevada increased 10% from 981,708 to 1,079,125. However, the total number of Gale searches fell 5% from 2,024,455 to 1,916,656. Both Gale sessions and searches peaked in 2009 at 1,158,393 and 2,098,925 respectively. The January 1 to October 31, 2011 usage, however, showed 515,986 sessions and 1,258,342 searches, which suggests that overall Gale usage may decline by the end of 2011 in comparison to previous years.

Gale database usage statistics provided a look at sessions and searches conducted from a library computer (identified by IP number) as opposed to those conducted remotely by using a jurisdictional userid and password (or patron library card barcode in the case of public libraries). The percentage of remote sessions accessing Gale databases increased progressively from 6.6% of all such sessions in 2008 to 9.5% in the January 1 to October

31, 2011 time period. However, an analysis of results for different public and school library districts in relation to overall Gale database usage trends was unable to determine any definitive correlation across districts between overall use and percentages of remote use.

Between January 1, 2008 and June 30, 2010 NSLA used state allocated funds to contract with Scholastic Online for provision of multiple databases. State budget reductions resulted in access to Scholastic Online databases, including Encyclopedia Americana, Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia, New Book of Knowledge Online, Lands and People, America the Beautiful, and the Spanish language Nueva Enciclopedia Cumbre being eliminated at the end of the contract on July 1, 2010. NSLA recently awarded a new contract to Scholastic Online, effective August 15, 2011, that provides access to Grolier Multimedia and New Book of Knowledge databases. For all of Nevada the total number of Grolier Online sessions moved from 229,359 in 2008 to 255,765 in 2009, before dropping to a 158,932 in a shortened 2010 calendar year, and total 4,507 for two and a half months in 2011. Remote Grolier Online sessions amounted to 14.6%, 9.6%, 8.6% and 7.9% of all sessions, respectively. The total documents retrieved increased from 2,075,613 in 2008 to 2,127,408 in 2009, then dropped to 1,289,322 in half of 2010, and totaled 44,404 during two and a half months of 2011.

Public Library Database Usage

Nevada public library patrons' use of ABC-CLIO rose 155% between calendar years 2008 and 2010, from 28,033 to 71,374 logins or sessions. Patrons engaged in another 60,004 sessions between January 1 and September 30, 2011. The number of public library EBSCO sessions increased 112% between 2008 and 2010, from 137,329 to 291,491 and is on track to exceed 2008 levels in 2011. However, overall Nevada public library use of the Gale databases fell 23% from 717,765 progressively down to 551,820 sessions in 2010. With only 174,783 sessions in 2011 through the end of October, usage will most likely fall further this year. Total public library Grolier Online sessions numbered 24,567 in 2008, 25,188 in 2009, 13,231 in half a year of 2010, and 198 in two and a half months of 2011.

Statistical tables in Annex F present public library database usage by library/system. Usage varied considerably across public libraries and systems.

With some exceptions (e.g., Amargosa Valley Library District), smaller public libraries and rural libraries participated less and less in the electronic database programs between 2008 and 2011 or only a few library patrons used the available databases. According to Nevada state demographer estimates ten of 22 public library jurisdictions in Nevada had 2010 populations below 10,000 and Nevada Public Library Survey data showed that each had fewer than 4,500 patrons that year. Usage started out low in 2008 in these jurisdictions, so low that one person might account for all the annual usage. It stayed or went lower, often to zero, with a few signs of renewed interest in databases from particular vendors in a few jurisdictions. Jurisdictions in Nevada weren't obligated to take advantage of the statewide databases program and local factors might have played a role in lack of use. Since the vendor data arrived later than expected there was insufficient time to contact the low usage public libraries to ask about the reasons for these trends.

School Library Database Usage

In general, school library patrons used the databases more than public library patrons did and favored different vendor databases (some of which were only available to schools under the statewide program). Nevada school district library ABC-CLIO logins or sessions rose 21% between calendar years 2008 and 2010, from 86,066 to 104,473. The 2011 sessions had already reached 111,056 by September 30 – exceeding the 2010 total in three-fourths of a year. Between 2008 and 2010 the number of school library EBSCO sessions increased 125% from 271,476 to 610,965. The 2011 EBSCO database sessions to date totaled 365,320. In the public schools Gale database usage doubled between 2008 and 2010 from 263,943 to 527,305 sessions, and is at 341,203 in 2011 year-to-date, with a new school year just under way. K-12 school children use Scholastic Online databases more than public library patrons. In 2008 there were 204,792 Grolier Online sessions in Nevada school districts, increasing to 230,577 in 2009, then dropping to 145,701 in the first six months of 2010, and totaling 4,309 in two and a half months of 2011.

Nevertheless, school use of online databases was uneven across Nevada counties and favored vendors varied by county. This is detailed more fully in Annex F.

Academic Library Database Usage

Academic library patrons had a monotonic increase of 39% in EBSCO sessions (559,983 in 2008 to 778,583 in 2010) and a 48% gain in searches (2,082,997 in 2008 to 3,086,029 in 2010). The average number of searches per session therefore increased as well, from 3.7 to 4.0 and is at 4.2 in the first part of 2011. The college students appeared to be on track to continue the upward trend of EBSCO use in 2011.

Of the eight academic libraries tracked, six had increases in EBSCO sessions and searches between 2008 and 2010. Only Truckee Meadows Community College fell in sessions and searches. It may stabilize or continue to fall in use based on 2011 statistics to date. The number of Western Nevada College sessions dropped 13% between 2008, but the number of searches increased 74%. Students may be taking greater advantage of using the EBSCO databases when they do so. Desert Research Institute increased use slightly from 2008 to 2009, decreased in 2010 and had three sessions and six searches in 2011.

LSTA 2008-2012 Plan Activity: Evaluate the quality and cost-effectiveness of statewide electronic content subscriptions.

The LSTA Plan provided no criteria for quality although the database Requests for Proposals (RFP) specified technical quality parameters that vendors had to meet in terms of database provision.

Another way to look at quality is from the perspective of those accessing the databases. Electronic Database Survey responses related to this kind of quality are reported below.

Public Library Ratings

About 86% of public librarians rated electronic database availability as "excellent" or "good," and 79% rated the ease of use, 77% the cost to the library, 71% the variety and topical coverage that well, but only 57% thought the appropriateness to patron needs as either "excellent" or "good." The top five uses that patrons made of the databases are to find information on employment/careers, homework, academic research, and leisure fiction and non-fiction reading. A comment from a librarian:

> *Patrons who are aware of the databases use them frequently and easily. Our challenge is to get the message out to the citizens who do not understand the breadth of the resources. Students are especially receptive to the use of the databases when they are made aware of them. Young patrons are astonished that they can access the information 24/7 so late night assignments are possible when libraries are closed.*

K-12 School Library Ratings

The 209 people who identified themselves as working in school libraries work at 121 elementary school, 44 middle school, and 45 high school libraries. Concerning the databases, 98% rated their availability as "excellent" or "good," 95% gave similar ratings to cost to the library, 94% to ease of use, 92% each to appropriateness to patron needs, variety of databases, and topical coverage. In these respects the electronic database program was serving the needs of school library better than the needs of public library patrons. Top uses made of the databases in order of frequency of "very often" or "often" responses were academic research, general reference, homework, leisure fiction reading and leisure non-fiction reading. A librarian commented:

> *One day I had two young men in doing research. Their whole class had been shown the databases and many were making good use of them and significant headway in their research. These two young men insisted on using Google instead. They were very frustrated and many of the sites they linked to were blocked at the district level and most of the others weren't relevant. I suggested the databases to them several times, and finally they asked for help in using them. I showed them how and where to search and within minutes they had a plethora of relevant information. Those two boys were database "converts" from then on, and they also showed other students how to find great and reliable information for their research.*

College/University Librarian Ratings

All respondents felt that EBSCO databases appropriateness to patron needs, availability, ease of use, variety, topical coverall and cost to the library were either "excellent" or "good." The five top database uses were academic research, homework, general reference, politics/government, and small business development.

Cost-Effectiveness

No specific cost or pricing information was available for this evaluation and this was not a desired evaluation focus. Individual public and school library district/system usage data in Annex F may raise cost-effectiveness questions because of very low, no, or declining use now or since 2008 in some public library jurisdiction and in some school districts. A combination of library patron interest in the databases and declining local budgets might account for usage drops. Population decline was not always a valid explanation since in some school districts school enrollment decreased but database usage increased. School and public libraries with little or no use of the statewide electronic databases were typically in rural areas. However, some large public libraries have experienced large drops in database usage even as usage in schools in the same area has increased. Further inquiry would be needed in order to determine causes of these changes.

LSTA 2008-2012 Plan Metric - Output: Number of school and public library web pages with links to electronic information resources.

This question cannot be answered precisely with the data available for the evaluation. Survey data indicated that two-thirds of the public library respondents have library portal access to LSTA databases, but that cannot be generalized to all Nevada libraries because of the skewed, non-random sample. Similarly, 85% of school librarians who responded had public computer internet access in the library, and 81% offered access through a library portal. Those that did not are all in Clark County. About 82% had WiFi access in the library building, with those that did not in either Clark or Pershing County.

Analysis of remote Gale and Grolier Online usage in the Annex F shows that some libraries have patrons whose remote access is a large proportion of all sessions or searches, while others, such as large Las Vegas-Clark County Library District have access though public library web pages but rarely used it. Attempts to analyze increases or decreases in electronic database usage in relation to remote access usage changes led to inconclusive findings.

Results of the survey indicated that school libraries often considered public libraries as being an alternative source for database access, at least for students, provided that the students have library cards, and vice versa. Library patrons in many rural counties, who might benefit most from access through school or public library web pages, often did not appear to take advantage of such access if it is available. School library survey respondents indicated in open-ended responses that when taught how to use remote access, some students eagerly took advantage of it. The students weren't always taught how to gain access remotely, however, and lower income students in particular might not have had computers available at home to undertake remote access.

Other Evaluation Findings

According to data provided by NSLA staff, all public libraries had three or more public computers with internet access. Lack of any computers is not an explanation for lack of library database usage, although old, slow computers and sporadic access could be.

According to survey data, about 87% of school libraries had staff computer access to the internet, and 85% had public computer internet access in the library. According to database usage from the four vendors, some individual libraries had no database sessions since 2008. Esmeralda County School District had no school libraries but according to its websites had T-1 lines in schools and so was able to make limited use of the databases.

Computer availability and statewide electronic database provision are insufficient in and of themselves to encourage database use. Patrons have to be willing to try the databases, have librarians able to teach them, or be able to use the databases themselves.

LSTA 2008-2012 Plan Activity: Coordinate training of public and school library staff on online information resources.

LSTA 2008-2012 Plan Metric-Output: Number of training sessions for library staff on online access to information each year.

LSTA 2008-2012 Plan Metric - Outcomes: Percent of trained library staff that indicate the statewide electronic subscriptions will allow them to provide improved access to quality information resources; percent increase of library staff that are able to effectively use and teach the use of the electronic information resources.

NSLA staff used LSTA funds to contract to provide online training in database use early in the LSTA grant evaluation period but this did not continue due to cuts in staff and funding.

Nevertheless, database training is needed and desired. About 40% of the public librarians felt that library patrons "often" (13%) or "sometimes" (27%) needed help in accessing databases. However, only 20% of the public librarian survey respondents believed that library staff ability to search databases themselves or to help patrons search databases was "excellent" or "very good." About 47% of public library survey responses responded that it would be "very helpful" if NSLA were to arrange for individual in-person database tutoring or training, one-third face-to-face group training, and 27% online webinars.

About 71% of school librarian survey respondents rated their staffs' own abilities to search electronic databases as "excellent" or "very good" and 70% gave those ratings to their staffs' abilities to help library patrons search databases. Their view is that only 26% of library patrons needed help in such access "often" or "very often." Nevertheless, 42% thought it would be "very helpful" if NSLA were to arrange for face-to-face group training in database access, 32% thought that of individual in-person tutoring or training, and 24% favored online webinar training.

LSTA 2008-2012 Plan Activity: Support state-level planning, leadership, and coordination of electronic information and technology services within the state.

NSLA has successfully provided state-level planning, leadership and coordination of electronic information and technology services within Nevada in very difficult circumstances. NSLA did this with minimal and declining staff because of repeated serious state budget cuts since 2008. Non-competitive LSTA funds supplemented limited and

declining state budgetary resources to provide database access when libraries could not draw on local funds to contract for databases themselves. The fiscal and funding environment has seriously hampered NSLA staff ability to do more and may continue to hamper their efforts in the future. The electronic information access provided, though, has been very well-received by those who access and use it.

Recommendations

- Continue using LSTA funds to leverage state funds in providing electronic database access, which is well-received when used and increasing in use for most vendors.

- Review interest of public library patrons in specific databases offered by vendors.

- Consider using LSTA funds to develop new outreach approaches regarding database use in local communities.

- Review ways to increase usage in low use public libraries. Consider cost effectiveness, equity issues, librarian and patron interest in databases in public libraries and local fiscal/staffing circumstances.

- Seek ways to provide training in electronic database content and use to librarians, especially in rural areas, so that they can better work with patrons. Librarians surveyed favored in-person training, although this may not be feasible for budgetary and staffing reasons.

C. NEVADA STATEWIDE DIGITAL INITIATIVE AND PROJECTS

Background

The Nevada Statewide Digital Initiative is a project developed to enhance and increase digital access and preservation of Nevada's rich historical resources housed in its many archives, museums, libraries, and other historical repositories. For over two decades, Nevada information providers have been digitizing selected collections for access via the Internet, and as of 2009, 61 of 110 cultural heritage institutions in Nevada had created digital resources. As stated in the Nevada Statewide Digital Plan, the goal of the initiative is "*to support Nevada residents and scholars and researchers interested in Nevada's culture and history, by providing increased access to collections helped by Nevada's cultural heritage organizations and allied information providers through digital access to the collections in a statewide collaborative initiative.*"

Evaluation Questions

The Nevada Statewide Digital Initiative and related projects supported under other LSTA grants relates to Goal #2 of the LSTA State Five Year Plan which states that the people, governments and associated cultural heritage organizations of Nevada will share responsibility to preserve, protect, and make the state's unique heritage available.

The questions addressed in this evaluation were concerned with the degree to which the Initiative and associated digitization projects met the goals and objectives outlined in the Digital Plan, and the extent to which the Digital Plan was meeting the ongoing programmatic needs of the project. A key outcome was for Nevada's cultural heritage institutions and allied information providers to develop and share a common vision and set of goals in the development of the Digital Initiative. As this program has been evolving through various stages of development, the chief evaluation questions included:

Has a collaborative planning document been developed, accepted, and made available via the web for program participants?

How has the planning document been used to support ongoing development of digital collections? Specifically, what has been accomplished to date under the plan? What successes and challenges have been achieved and/or addressed?

Have cultural heritage organizations developed partnerships as a step toward developing a statewide network for digitization?

Methodology

The evaluation included review of program documents, including state program reports, grant documents, meeting minutes, planning documents, and evaluation reports; review of survey data collected at the initiation of the project; inventory and usage of collections accessible via the Nevada Digital Collections Portal and Nevada Statewide Digital Initiative website as of Fall 2011; and interviews with key stakeholders. A list of persons

interviewed is contained in Annex B. A list of documents reviewed is contained in the Bibliography in Annex C.

Findings

The Nevada Statewide Digital Initiative and related projects supported under other LSTA grants implements Goal #2 of the LSTA State Five Year Plan which states that the people, governments and associated cultural heritage organizations of Nevada will share responsibility to preserve, protect, and make the state's unique heritage available. The project also complements the State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) Strategic Plan goal to achieve best practices in electronic record keeping, and the NSLA Strategic Plan goals to identify and remove barriers to public information and to explore new service environments.

Digital Initiative Key Milestones[8]

Beginning in FY 2008/09, a series of advisory committee meetings, community forums, and a statewide survey brought together diverse local and statewide organizations into the beginning of a true collaborative framework, with a shared vision and long term goals. Out of these initial planning activities, the Nevada Statewide Digital Advisory Committee (NSDAC) developed the following set of actions to build collaboration in digital activities across statewide organizations:

- Creating a website to provide access to digital collections and projects
- Identifying and adopting best practices and standards
- Creating a collection policy
- Developing a digital governance plan
- Creating local and statewide partnerships
- Developing a pilot project to model curatorial traditions for libraries, museums, archives, and others to use in creating their own digital materials
- Supporting the leadership of the committee to advance the work of the project through regular meetings.

These actions were formalized in June 2009 in the Nevada Statewide Digital Plan, 2009-2014, developed with the assistance of consultants funded by 2008 and 2009 LSTA competitive grants.[9] Plan goals have been accomplished as follows.

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[8] A timeline of key milestones is provided in Annex G.

Digital Initiative Plan Goals and Accomplishments

Goal I: Provide online access to digital collections held by Nevada cultural heritage organizations and information providers.

Accomplishments:

Developed and launched the Nevada Digital Collections open access portal at http://omeka.library.unlv.edu/omeka/ (2011)

Provided access to 17 digital collections from over 15 organizations across Nevada. (2011)

Goal II: Develop and implement standards and best practices that will improve access to Nevada's digital collections.

Accomplishments:

Researched and developed a set of Best Practices and Standards accessible through the Nevada Digital Initiative website via NSLA. Coverage includes digital imaging guidelines, Dublin Core mapping for photographic metadata harvesting, selected Library of Congress Subject Headings for the NSLA, and national best practices from the Association of Research Libraries. (2010)

Provided training to advisory committee members. NSLA staff members attended training in Phoenix, AZ and San Jose, CA on digital preservation for collaboratives, developing digital preservation programs and policies, and planning and assessment. Additional ongoing training opportunities for staff have been identified through a variety of online digital preservation courses and workshops. (2010)

Goal III: Develop a leadership/governance structure that will support the growth and sustainability of a standards-compliant digital initiative created by Nevada's cultural heritage organizations and information providers.

Accomplishments:

Established and convened the Nevada Statewide Digital Advisory Committee (NSDAC). In addition to NSLA representatives, members are from archives, government, and education entities; museums and historical societies; and academic, public, and special libraries. NSDAC provided forums for diverse organizations across Nevada to come together to create shared vision, goals, and strategic plan through ongoing meetings and communication via websites and conferences. (2008 - ongoing)

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[9] The survey report and digital plan can be accessed via the Nevada State Library and Archives website at: http://nsla.nevadaculture.org. An analysis of the status of the Initiative as of late 2010 was published in a white paper by Jason Vaughan: Toward a Nevada Digital Collaborative, *Library Faculty/Staff Scholarship & Research*, Article 359, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (2011), available at: http://digitalcommons.library.unlv.edu/lib_articles/359.

Established NSDAC working groups on Best Practices/Standards, Collaboration, and Governance. Best Practices/Standards working group conducted research, developed, and disseminated information on best practices and standards on the Nevada Statewide Digital Initiative website. The Collaboration working group researched and helped identify potential partnership opportunities and needs of small organizations, and identified training needs. The Governance working group was disbanded when it was determined that the NSDAC provided sufficient governing structure. (2008 - ongoing)

Goal IV: Establish a collaborative digitization model where the full range of types and sizes of Nevada cultural heritage organizations and information providers can participate.

Accomplishments:

Conducted the Nevada Statewide Digital Planning Survey. A statewide survey of Nevada's digital landscape in late 2008, the first statewide digital survey in the nation, established a baseline measure of digital activity in Nevada. Stakeholder engagement across the breadth of institution types was established with 61 of 110 CHIs reporting, including public libraries (29%); museums, archives, and historical societies (26%); academic and special libraries (18%); and archives and other institution types (27%). The survey gathered data on information technology, digital collection management, selection of materials, training, digital collections rights and practices, partnerships and collaborations, preservation, and usage and evaluation. Information collected in the survey provides sizeable potential for future collaborative efforts, including topical information on collections and locations of primary source materials. A summary of survey findings is provided in Annex G.

Developed set of Best Practices and Standards accessible through the Nevada Digital Initiative website via NSLA. (2010)

Developed collaborative demonstration project: UNR Knowledge Center Special Collections and Nevada Historical Society partnered to develop digital exhibit commemorating the 100th anniversary of the historic Johnson-Jeffries fight in Reno. (2010)

Established partnerships: University of Nevada Reno (UNR) Knowledge Center Special Collections and Nevada historical Society: Johnson-Jeffries Fight; Sparks Museum and the Challenger Learning Center (Sparks High School): NSLA's historical newspapers in Nevada; NSLA and the Nevada Historical Society: Nevada Historical Quarterly; NSLA and the Washington State Digital Archives Multi-state project: hosts Nevada digital images.

Challenges

Several sets of challenges have existed and continue to exist. The initial difficulty was bringing together geographically distant individuals and organizations from different curatorial traditions, and with a history of independent decision making, into a collaborative framework. Potential participants differed in their knowledge of digitization benefits, technologies, and practices as well as skills and capacity to take on digitization projects. Institutional differences between central vision and goals of libraries, museums, and archives posed barriers to cooperation. During the years of economic recession, staff

downsizing and other resource stresses have been felt across the board, and directly affected the ability of every potential participant to continue or even initiate digital projects. Staffing impacts were felt particularly keenly in 2010 and 2011 as many participants were forced to reduce or discontinue work on project activities due to budget reductions.

The diversity of institutional types created other complexities, including differences in perception of the benefits and value of digitization. While preservation of fragile historical objects and documents is central to the missions of historical organizations, the benefits of making these items digitally accessible and discoverable have not been perceived equivalently across different institution types. Some museum funders place a high value on physical visitors to a location, and digital availability of images can be perceived as a potential cause of declining visitors. Academic institutions, on the other hand, strive to improve discoverability of collections to researchers, and value the potential for digital technologies to foster development of new modes of inquiry.

These challenges have been met in various ways. The survey and development of the Digital Plan provided a knowledge base and framework for project activities. Key stakeholder meetings and trainings fostered growth in awareness and knowledge needed to envision digital projects. A Google site provided a forum for communication and sharing of information. A web site hosted by NSLA was created to disseminate best practices and standards. Partnerships have been developed across multiple types of institutions, growing from one in 2008 to at least seven in 2011.

Next steps for the project include continuing to encourage more institutions to develop digitization projects, to create partnerships that maximize resources, and to make these collections accessible through the digital collections portal. A primary objective will be to increase the discoverability of collections by increasing the numbers of links to the portal appearing on institutional websites statewide and nationally.

Recommendations

- The NSDAC should reconvene to assess the current status of remaining plan activities in light of economic realities and statewide needs for digitization, and continue to encourage participation from more organizations and contribution of digital collections accessible via the portal.

D. STATEWIDE TALKING BOOKS PROGRAM

Background

The Nevada Talking Book Services (NTBS) at NSLA serves blind and physically handicapped children and adults across Nevada with recorded books and magazines, cassette and digital players, and items in Braille. NTBS is part of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) network administered by the federal government established in 1931. Services are free to eligible qualified Nevadans. Clients have access to local Nevada NTBS catalog items as well as to materials in the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) online catalog service that provides access to NLS items. Items are mailed to clients or can be picked up in Carson City. An applicant completes a standard application form and, after certification by a physician, submits the form to NTBS.

The Talking Book collections consist of recreational and general informational reading. Textbooks, curriculum-oriented and remedial reading materials are not included. A unique valuable feature of the Nevada Talking Book Services is the recording service which records and makes available the rich heritage of Nevada history and authors to Nevadans and the national network of Talking Book programs, as well as Nevada magazines.

LSTA grants in concert with state funding for the Nevada Talking Books programs have supported staffing for NTBS outreach, book and machine lending and library automation systems, training for staff and volunteers, and recording.

Evaluation questions

The NTBS and recording programs fulfill Nevada LSTA Plan Goals 4, 6 and 7: Assure equitable access to library and information services to all individuals, including the un-served and underserved; create awareness of services that meet the needs of clients, and explore new environments for providing services.

To that end, specific evaluation questions asked in the study included: 1) What are the characteristics and metrics of program activities such as clients reached, items and machines circulated, and outreach? 2) Are clients satisfied with the program? 3) What percentage of the estimated potential population of eligible persons in Nevada is currently being reached?

Methodology

Data gathering included interviews with NSLA staff, review of existing evaluation data in LSTA reports and State Program reports, statistical reports generated by NTBS, U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey population statistics, data provided by the Employment and Disability Institute at Cornell University, and a spring 2011 NSLA survey of NTBS clients.

Findings

Talking Book Operations

In general, the Talking Book Operations program achieved LSTA goals during the grant period, despite significant challenges posed by staffing reductions and the need for specially trained personnel to operate and manage the recording program.

Clients and circulation. LSTA grant activity focused on supporting NTBS in order to provide resources to qualifying individuals with visual and physical disabilities. An identified output associated with this activity was the number of individuals that utilize the tools and products available through the Talking Books Library Program each year and the circulation of items to these clients.

As noted above, the total number of clients served by the NTBS has fluctuated over the review period, with total clients decreasing progressively from 2007 to 2009, and then increasing from 2010 to 2011. However, the total number of active clients has decreased every year from 1,777 to 1,391. There were approximately 1,300 active individual users as of Fall 2011, many of whom were seniors. NTBS data indicated the preponderance of active participants were middle-aged or older, and qualified for the Talking Book program as they became visually disabled due to age-related conditions. In addition to the individual users, there were approximately 100 organizational users. Circulation of items included books recorded on cassette and CD as well as digital formats, Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) items, and Nevada magazines. The numbers of users and circulation in FY 2007 through 2011 are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. NTBS clients and circulation, 2007 to 2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Active clients*	1777	1682	1478	1425	1391
Circulation	126,008	102,840	90784	88377	129,935

*As of end of April 2011

Outreach. Efforts to increase the number of active users were led by the Outreach and Public Awareness Office (OPA), and were statewide, focused on identified client populations and needs. There was outreach from Carson City into the northeastern part of the state, and from a Clark County office to the southern part of the state. Staff assigned to this office engaged in extensive outreach activities during the grant period, building networks of like-minded agencies, professionals and individuals throughout Clark County through presentations, attendance at community functions, and a strong telephone and email presence. A summary of outreach activities is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. NTBS Outreach, 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Events presented	77	72	93	114	81
Events attended	39	58	72	75	102
Calls/emails in/out	2,867	2,113	3,947	4,141	3,889

OPA in Clark County focused Talking Book outreach to areas of higher population in order to reach more potential clients in those areas. In addition, outreach staff dedicated effort to radio media with the expectation that eligible Nevadans, their family or friends would hear about the Talking Book program and its benefits, thus reaching out to bring more eligible residents into the program.

Staff worked diligently to increase the number and percentage of Talking Book active users, and successfully reduced turnover and replaced lost patrons. The lack of significant increase appeared to be related to staffing constraints and strategy deficiencies. Further, although staff maintained a highly proactive outreach campaign with significant contact with the community through email, telephone, and in person availability, there appeared to be little means to track the success of the specific outreach activities to reduction of turnover or addition of new patrons to the program.

Efforts to further develop the lending program were led by the Carson City Office. In spite of severe cuts to funds and staffing, these efforts were largely successful, due in part to ongoing staff development and staff diligence. Staff development included learning and networking opportunities at the KLAS Users Conference and the National Librarians Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped Conference. Staff development included administrative training as well.

Client satisfaction. The Talking Books program was considered highly successful for users. A satisfaction survey was administered to NTBS clients in Spring 2011, which collected information on awareness of certain features of the Talking Books program, access to computers and the Internet, and perceived service quality. Approximately 550 respondents out of an estimated 1,900 provided input on their use of services such as BARD, the NTBS catalog, and book delivery.

Although the survey did not utilize random sampling, demographic information on age collected in the survey indicated that the distribution of respondents by age range was very close to the age distribution of clients registered in the system at the time (63% of survey respondents were 60 years of age or older, versus 69% age 65 or older in NTBS statistical reports). Over half (51%) of respondents said they visited, called, or contacted the library weekly or monthly; another 31% visited, called, or contacted annually. Results indicated that a majority of NTBS patrons did not make use of typical personal computer technology

to access the library, order materials, or use the Internet. Slightly less than half (45%) owned computers, 41% had access to the Internet, a third of respondents said they knew about the BARD system, and only 16% indicated they ordered books using the online public access catalog. [10]

When asked in what areas the library had been valuable to them, respondents selected recreational (34%), companionship (21%), and educational (18%) as their top choices, with other factors less popular: personal growth (13%), cultural (9%), and religious (7%). Clients heard about the library most often from doctors/others (38%), and friends or relative (34%), with only 11% indicating that they heard about the service from a librarian.

Survey respondents were highly positive about the services they received from NTBS, with 91% to 98% rating factors such as equipment quality; condition, number, and selection of books; delivery speed; and staff courtesy as either excellent, very good, or good. Overall service was rated excellent or very good by 95%.

In addition to positive user satisfaction as evidenced by the survey, Nevada clients stated that the Nevada books and magazines increased their Nevada historical knowledge and their Nevada living experience. NTBS staff reported the following expressions of gratitude from individuals to NTBS staff in various forms including telephone conversations, letters and emails:

> One letter commented: *Please accept our thanks for all the talking books.... My wife and I were always very avid readers, and what a pleasure it is to hear your wonderful narrators make those books come alive.*
>
> The daughter of a client whose mother had passed away wrote, summarized the benefits of the Talking Books she had enjoyed, *Her quality of life was much better thanks to her 'books' that entertained, educated, involved her in the world. My aunt now uses the program through Arizona.*
>
> Rehabilitation after brain surgery: *A Talking Book user could not comprehend text after brain surgery. Through the Talking Book program she could both see and hear the book, slow down the audio, repeat the audio, and was able to restore her ability to read print.*
>
> Comfort after loss of sight: *A Talking Book user reported severe depression after losing his sight. The Talking Book program provided comfort and the companionship of books, thus easing the loss of sight for this Nevadan.*
>
> Connection to the larger world: *A granddaughter reported that the Talking Book program provided her grandmother's with thousands of hours of pleasure and a sense of community during her final years.*

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[10] Percentages are based on the number of responses for each question.

Young adults benefited, too: *Two reading disabled young adults used the Talking Book program to extend their reading comprehension so they were able to graduate with their high school class and go on to college; an accomplishment for which they fully credit the Talking Book program.*

Potential eligible residents. In 2010 the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) found that approximately 2% of the noninstitutionalized population of Nevada reported a visual disability. In effect, 51,021 Nevadans with self-reported visual difficulties, with a margin of error of ± 6,438, could be NTBS clients out of an estimated state base population of 2,668,966 (±1,868).[11] To qualify for the Talking Books program visual difficulty would have to be verified by medical personnel. However, the ACS defines "visual difficulty" as blindness or having serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses. Therefore, ACS visual difficulty data is considered a good proxy measure for Talking Books eligibility by such respected organizations as the Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute. A detailed analysis of 2010 ACS data is provided in Annex H.

NTBS clients were not well distributed by age group or county. A comparison of ACS data with NTBS usage data suggested that in relation to their proportion of the population the current program had not sufficiently reached several age groups of Nevadans with visual difficulties. Those underserved by NTBS appeared to be middle-age adults (ages 35 to 64), young adults (ages 18 to 34), and youth (ages 5 to 17). For example, in 2010 ACS 1-year data indicated that youth and young adults ages 5 to 34 made up approximately 16% of the Nevada population with visual difficulty, but youth and young adults ages 7 to 34 made up only 1.8% of the NTBS clients according to the May 2011 survey. Similarly, young and middle age adults ages 18 to 64 comprised the majority (54.6%) of the Nevada visually impaired population according to ACS 2010 data, but only 27.9% of the NTBS clients were ages 25 to 65 according to NTBS operational data from October 2011.

The NTBS operations program targeted the elderly, ages 60 or 65 and older, while ACS data indicated that the greatest number of people with visual difficulties were ages 35 to 64.

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[11] U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, S1810, Disability Characteristics, Universe: Civilian noninstitutionalized population. 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Available from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml using a topical search for "people, disabilities" selecting S1810 "Disability Characteristics" dataset, 2010 ACS 1-Year Estimates and a geographic selection of "State" and "Nevada." The number of individuals reporting visual difficulties in Nevada may be increasing. The 2010 statistics are more recent than the Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute (http://www.disability statistics.org/) report that in 2009 found that 48,800 individuals of all ages ± 5,010 had visual difficulties. The Cornell Report is also based on ACS data except that it is from 2009, a year earlier. One of the authors of that report provided the evaluation team with 1-year 2010 ACS statistics. The U.S. Census Bureau considers its 3-year rolling estimates, which first became available in 2010, to be more accurate than the 1-year estimates because of a larger sample size and so a lower margin of error. The 3-year estimate released in 2010 is that 50,980 Nevadans of all ages have a vision difficulty, with a margin of error of ± 4,240. Because of the larger sample size the 3-year disability estimates are available and reliable for more Nevada counties than are available from the 1-year ACS.

While only 37% of Nevadans with visual difficulties were over age 65 in 2010 according to ACS data, this group made up 67% of NTBS clients that year.

Similarly, NTBS clients were not distributed across counties in proportion to the number of individuals with visual difficulties in some counties. According to ACS 2010 3-year rolling averages, less than 2% of the Nevada population estimated to have visual difficulties lived in Carson City, but 7% of Talking Book clients lived there. Nearby Washoe County was also overrepresented among NTBS clients in comparison with ACS statistics. The location of the Talking Books headquarters in Carson City was a likely influence here. On a proportional basis the most under-served county was Clark County, which was estimated to have approximately 74% of people in Nevada with visual difficulties in 2010,[12] while Clark County residents made up only 57% of NTBS clients. Potential Talking Book clients in Clark County also included an estimated 3,058 youth ages 5 to 17 (± 558), and 20,342 (± 1,506) young and middle-age adults ages 18 to 64,[13] which groups were under-represented among Clark County NTBS clients.

Looking ahead, additional issues to consider over the next five years include talking about services for the increasing number of Baby Boomers who are just now reaching age 65. This group may well be more active and interested in different book and magazine content than the current clients.

Talking Book Recordings

The LSTA grant also supported the Talking Books program by recording targeted Nevada materials for use in the program and for loan to other network programs. This is a unique service; books and magazines about Nevada and by Nevada authors are not recorded by NLS and would not be available if not for this program. An identified output associated with this activity was the number of Nevada specific books and magazines recorded through Talking Book network programs. This effort focused on two recording activities: (1) recording Nevada authors and magazines for Talking Book collections and (2) duplicating on demand Nevada and NLS digital books for Nevada patrons. Volunteer narrators were recruited and trained to use the specialized recording equipment.

During the grant period the number of Nevada specific books and magazines recorded increased overall. In FY09, for example, eight Nevada magazines were recorded versus seven in FY08. In FY09, three Nevada books were recorded, with six additional Nevada magazines, again continuing the trend. The level of service was enhanced in FY09 when two of the nine books recorded were specifically requested by Nevada state agencies to help serve impaired individuals, and to provide these individuals with materials in a format compatible with their impairment.

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[12] Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder, S1810, Disability Characteristics, 2008-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) 3-year Estimates, Nevada total and Nevada by County and Carson City. The best estimate is 74.4% and the range is 73.8% to 75.0%.
[13] Ibid.

As a result of the transition to the new digital flash format, staff workload in the recording books operation was increased because of the need to engage in the time-consuming process of re-recording from digital CD or magnetic tape to the new digital flash format. This retro-recording project was conducted concurrent with ongoing scheduled new recording projects. Materials recorded are provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Nevada materials Recorded and Circulated

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Books Recorded	6	23	10	3	11
Magazines recorded	3	7	6	4	5
Digital magazines recorded	na	na	na	na	4
Nevada Book Circulation	na	109	538	1,151	1,012

Recommendations

The following recommendations are consistent with those noted by the National Library Service in their letter to NTBS dated September 8, 2011, which addressed outreach and service planning, and digital transition issues including space.[14]

- Update the outreach plan. Based on U.S. Census Bureau data, there were an estimated 51,000 Nevadans who could potentially qualify for the Talking Book program. For the forthcoming LSTA 5-Year Plan, it is recommended that NTBS develop a formally designed and strategically targeted outreach plan for the Talking Book program that seeks to balance NTBS program and staff capacity with gradually increasing program reach to potential clients currently not served.

- Develop Service Plan. Concurrent with the outreach plan, develop an equitable service plan to meet the differing potential needs and uses of Nevada Talking Book Services in relation to the full range of ages, geographic locations, and cultural identities of clients. Consistent with program goals, explore new environments for providing services.

- Proactively Manage Space Assets. In planning the transition from analog to digital Talking Books recording in conjunction with modified outreach efforts, give due consideration to repurposing of NSLA space currently devoted to collection and equipment storage.

[14] Letter from Vickie Collins, Network Consultant, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, to Hope Williams, NTBS, dated September 8, 2011.

E. COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM

Background

The Nevada State Library and Archives (NSLA) distributes its annual LSTA award to support library services statewide through several categories – administrative, statewide, mini-grant, competitive sub-grant, and innovation sub-grant. The administrative and statewide categories are non-competitive and are established by NSLA based on statewide library and program needs that reflect the LSTA State Plan for Nevada. The minigrant ($5,000 or less), competitive and innovation ($100,000 or more) sub-grants categories are competitive. Any public, school, higher education library or special library that meets established LSTA eligibility criteria may propose a project for a competitive LSTA sub-grant. The Mini-Grant category has a total funding cap of $50,000 and the competitive and innovation applications are funded based on federal LSTA funds availability. The Innovation Grants require 10% matching funds. NSLA staff review and rank the Mini-Grant applications and State Council on Libraries and Literacy (SCLL) members review and rank the Competitive and Innovation grants. The raters use a standard rubric. Ratings are averaged across raters in order to rank-order the applications. Ranked lists are submitted to the NSLA Division Administrator/State Librarian for final award once federal LSTA funds are authorized for Nevada.

Evaluation Questions

This program is not specifically mentioned in the LSTA Five Year State Plan 2008-2012. However, as detailed in Annex I the competitive sub-grants program relates to all five goals of the LSTA Plan. The evaluation RFP specifies five questions and two relevant process questions detailed and discussed below.

Methodology

For this evaluation REAP Change staff reviewed applications for federal Fiscal Years (FY) 2008 through 2011, final reports to IMLS for FY 2008 and 2009, ran an online survey completed by 43 respondents (including 10 non-applicants), ran a focus group at the Nevada Library Association meetings, observed an Applicant grant training workshop for 2012 applicants, and interviewed the NSLA LSTA Coordinator. Limitations of the data included a low response rate to the Competitive Grants Program Survey, especially from nonparticipants. The response rate of that survey could not be determined precisely because respondents included both individual libraries and library districts. Twelve previous applicants for LSTA competitive grants were not available to respond to the survey because of retirement and relocation reasons.

Findings

RFP Evaluation Question 1: How does the competitive sub-grant process help meet the goals of the LSTA State Plan?

Competitive grants have contributed to meeting each of the four LSTA Plan goals. LSTA applicants specified the LSTA Plan and IMLS goals their application addressed. For example, a $100,000 Innovation grant to Washoe County Library System "Expanding Technology Access and Training to Special Needs Population in Washoe County" responded to Goal 1 (using technology to provide access to information) and Goal 4 (equitable access to unserved and underserved populations). In response to Goal 2 (shared responsibility to preserve, protect and make the state's unique cultural heritage program available), a $79,096 competitive grant "Nevada Statewide Digitization Plan" to NSLA led to creation of the Nevada Statewide Digitization Plan and its successful implementation described elsewhere in this evaluation. In 2009 three $5,000 Mini-Grants to rural public libraries enhanced computer technology (Goal 1)[15], greatly expanded availability of large print library books to seniors (Goal 4)[16], improved access of school children to information about their Great Basin heritage (Goal 2)[17], and two $5,000 grants to libraries in urban areas contributed to early literacy success[18] and improved senior services[19] (Goal 4). Five grants since 2008 have contributed to library training (Goal 3). [20] A complete list of grant applications and which NSLA and IMLS goals they addressed can be found in Annex I.

RFP Evaluation Question 2: To what extent do competitive grants benefit eligible libraries and library clientele?

Between FY 2008 and 2011 there were:

- 32 Mini-Grants funded with a total value of $150,769, an average value of $4,711 and a range of $2,550 to $5,000.

- 58 Competitive Grants funded with a total value of $2,695,985, an average value of $46,482.50 and a range of $8,500 to $100,000.

- 4 Innovation Grants funded with a total value of $406,000, an average value of $101,500, and a range of $100,000 to $106,000.

There were also two Mini-Grant applications of $5,000 each, three Competitive Grants of $67,670 to $100,000 each (total value $254,570), and two Innovation grants of $90,000 and $100,000 (total value $190,000) that were not funded. The reason for lack of funding was insufficient LSTA dollars awarded to Nevada.

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[15] Technology Enhancement for the Public, Beatty Library District ($5,000)
[16] Large Print Book, Pershing County Library ($5,000)
[17] Remembering Our Great Basin Heritage, White Pine County Schools ($5,000)
[18] Early Literacy Success, Carson City Library ($5,000)
[19] Enhanced Senior Library Services, Henderson District Public Libraries, Harrison Park Senior Center ($5,000)
[20] Continuing Education@Your Desktop, Elko County Library ($5,000 in 2008); Silver State Virtual Library Education Portal, Carson City Library ($54,816 in 2010); Customer First Business Intelligence, Las-Vegas-Clark County Library District ($90,000 in 2010); Have Training – Need Travel, CLAN ($4,743 in 2011); Customer Connect, Las Vegas-Clark County Library District ($100,000 in 2011).

Grants Benefits

Based on a reading of the 2008 and 2009 final reports, the competitive grants program usually succeeded in benefiting recipient libraries and library clientele as planned and proposed in the grant applications. The libraries receiving competitive grants often provided glowing anecdotal evidence from the recipients of improved library services that were documented in the annual final grant reports sent to IMLS.

According to the focus group, LSTA grants supported access to resources that would otherwise be unavailable, especially in rural areas. Sub-groups especially benefitting from LSTA grants included low-income people, Spanish speakers, Native Americans, teens, and other hard-to-reach populations.

As became clear in the final reports, only a very few programs did not reach their stated goals, or in rare cases were completely abandoned, because of staff turnover or decline in normal operational funding that was not expected at the time of application or because library patrons such as teens did not respond in anticipated ways to offers of a new service.

Why Libraries Apply for LSTA Grants

LSTA funds are a supplemental source of funding intended to expand library services and are not intended to replace normal library operating budget sources. Focus group participants said they applied for LSTA funds when they had the capacity but not the funding to do a new project. That was considered more important than size or rural/urban nature of the libraries, although focus group members recognized that larger size libraries and districts have more capacity to take on larger projects. All levels of LSTA competitive grants helped. Having a grant leveraged other resources because local Library Board or Town Council members were more likely to approve using extra internal resources and staff to support completion of short-term grants.

Libraries have been struggling to complete their normal work while managing reduced budgets and staffs. The focus group wondered at what point a library becomes eligible for LSTA funds to do something "new" when what is "new" is what local funding used to support in the normal course of events. It would be contrary to LSTA rules to change that rule. However, some smaller, low budget libraries applied repeatedly for items that would be part of normal operating expenditures for a better funded library (e.g., purchasing a copying machine), with their proposals pre-vetted as LSTA funding eligible. It may become harder in the future to determine if proposals are, in fact, LSTA funding eligible if previously the library could have used operating funds for a project, program or purchase, but no longer can because of budget declines.

A tension that surfaced in the focus group involves a difficult fairness and balance issue. Some library staff advocated for distribution of LSTA funds across the state based on population because Nevada receives its LSTA funding allotment based partly on population. Others advocated for continuing distribution of funds using the current competitive sub-grants process, noting that there are needy libraries in the less well-populated parts of

Nevada and that the number of public and school libraries is not distributed across Nevada solely on the basis of population.

RFP Evaluation Question 3: What do non-participating libraries and borderline participants need to be able to participate in the sub-grant program?

While every year the competitive sub-grant program is open to all public, school, university/college and special libraries (open to the public), many libraries never participated during the evaluation period. Three university libraries, libraries or jurisdiction central offices in 14 of 22 public library jurisdictions, six of 17 public school districts, and four special libraries (including NSLA) accounted for over 101 competitive sub-grant applications made between 2008 and 2011. In some years larger public library jurisdictions or school districts filed more than one LSTA grant application and some small libraries applied every year for one LSTA grant. Often smaller libraries, especially those in rural counties, and around two-thirds of the school districts never participated. The entire list of applicants including library jurisdiction, school district, and public, school, academic (university/college) or special library designation can be found in Annex I.

Libraries have been proposing less ambitious projects for competitive grant funding. In 2010 there were only four Mini-Grant applications, compared to nine in 2008, ten in 2009, and then nine in 2011. The average dollar value of funded Competitive Grants rose from $49,805 in 2008 to $53,877 in 2009 and has been declining since then ($42,341 in 2010 and $40,044 in 2011).

Why Libraries Do Not Apply for LSTA Grants

LSTA encourages a library to propose a new or expanded service/program in their LSTA application request. Librarians throughout Nevada responded to the survey and 72% reported that their libraries had experienced a decrease in their budgets since 2008. Public librarians said in the focus group that their local communities supported them in general, at times over other public agencies, but simply did not have sufficient funding. Library directors found it hard to convince local Trustees, Boards or town councils to do a new LSTA funded project when the regular budget wouldn't support normal operations.

The focus group participants said that rural public librarians might not have had the time to apply. Staff turnover plus subsequently frozen positions were problems for libraries in the current economy. Consultant analysis of staffing patterns reported in Nevada Public Library Survey data indicated that between 2008 and 2010 for many library jurisdictions it was not so much that librarians were being laid off as that their clerical and library aides were. [21] The loss of library aides meant that workloads increased for any remaining aides

[21] The Nevada Public Library Survey data and analysis be found in Annex D. In 2008 there were 234.98 FTEs of people holding the title of librarian in Nevada public libraries. In 2009 that rose 2.3% to 240.48, although one small library district lost it's only librarian for a year. In 2010 the librarian FTEs dropped 6.2% to 225.48. Much of the FTEs loss came in larger libraries. In contrast, the total "other paid staff" FTEs dropped 4.2% between 2008 and 2009 from 761.11 to 729.31 and then another 13.8% to 628.37 in 2010. In any year 90% to 91% of "other paid staff" were "clerical staff" – which in a library includes library aides.

and for librarians, who likely often ended up absorbing a portion of the work that aides otherwise might have done. This left less time available to try out something new or to expand services.

Survey results and the focus group indicated that another problem was that it was hard to do an LSTA funded project and show outcomes in a year. Also, the timing of LSTA funding availability may not have fit well with the timing of staff availability. A survey respondent wrote of another issue: "Being a small rural county, it is hard for us to compete with larger counties on Innovation grants because what is 'new' for us is old hat for the larger counties." Of course a library jurisdiction could apply for a competitive sub-grant or a mini-grant instead of an Innovation sub-grant, since the former don't have to be new in the state or anywhere else – just something new to that library or jurisdiction. There were, in fact, similar projects that were funded with LSTA funds in more than one jurisdiction. This point may need to be clarified more with prospective applicants.

Survey respondents who had applied for grants in some years but not others also mentioned lack of staff time to write and manage new grants, staff turnover, and drastic staff and budget cuts as reasons that they didn't apply in some years. Ten survey respondents who had never applied for an LSTA grant indicated that if they had, it would have been for a Mini-Grant ($5,000 or less). When asked to check off reasons for not applying, none checked that there was not enough LSTA money available for the effort, so even $5,000 was of interest. Five top reasons for never applying for an LSTA grant were budget or staff cuts, too much time needed to apply, no matching funds for an Innovation grant, too much red tape in the process, and insufficient library staff or other resources to do a grant project. None checked that no one knew that the library was eligible to apply.

RFP Evaluation Question 4: Is the competitive sub-grant process most effective at reaching any particular user groups? Are library user groups aware of the sub-grant program?

The focus group, an SCLL member, and some survey respondents expressed a concern that the sub-grant process favored public over school libraries. Although during the evaluation period there were approximately 552 school libraries and 83 public library sites in Nevada, the number of LSTA applications submitted by public libraries outnumbered applications from school libraries between 2008 and 2011. Two reasons were given by respondents: established LSTA eligibility criteria require resource sharing through an interlibrary loan project, and difficulties school librarians had in getting away from their work for mandatory applicant training.

According to the focus group, an additional problem for schools was that the last Nevada legislature let school districts decide how to absorb cuts. Some school districts are reportedly considering cutting school libraries in order to cover textbook budgets. The effect on future school library LSTA applications is unknown - it may depend on who is left and how proactive those school librarians are in seeking LSTA funds.

RFP Evaluation Question 5: How satisfied is library staff at eligible libraries with the sub-grant process? What changes are desired – as long as state and federal requirements are still met?

The grants process involves two steps. First the NSLA LSTA Coordinator sends out an invitation announcement that specifies when preliminary proposals and applications are due and lays out the process that will be followed for funding. Libraries then submit proposals and NSLA staff review them for appropriateness for IMLS funding according to federal and state rules. Proposers also may request and do receive feedback from the NSLA Coordinator about their preliminary proposals. Second, NSLA invites libraries with eligible proposals to submit a full LSTA grant application. The full application is reviewed and ranked by NSLA staff (for Mini-Grants) or SCLL members (for Competitive and Innovation grants) and final award decisions are made by the NSLA Division Administrator/State Librarian based on federal LSTA funds availability and the ranks.

Satisfaction with the Sub-grants Process

Survey and focus group results indicated that NSLA has done a superior job communicating about the sub-grant process and that the process was very well-received. About 92% of survey respondents knew of the process and knew about LSTA funding. Over 90% agreed that proposal and application guidelines are clear and website information is useful. Open-ended improvement suggestions were to streamline the Mini-Grant application process, at times submit a full application instead of a proposal first, get information out sooner, and distribute the SCLL rankings sooner to the library community at large.

The focus group indicated that there was a problem last year (2011 applications) with technical aspects of submitting the grant application online. Electronic mail submittal, however, was appreciated when it worked and respondents indicated that it would be desirable to extend it to include acceptance of electronic signatures, if allowed.

Satisfaction with the Ranking Process

Over 90% of survey respondents agreed that the process ran in a transparent way and that SCLL rated sub-grant applications in a fair way. This is an exceptionally high rating.

SCLL members mentioned being oriented to the rating and ranking process although some – especially non-librarians – found it confusing at first. How to rank was discussed during orientation and in Council meetings. SCLL members who do not come from a library background said they got better at ranking with experience. SCLL members and the focus group felt that the diversity of SCLL was a strong point of the ranking process. Having applicants available by phone or videoconferencing during proposal reviews was a positive along with no longer requiring in-person presentations by applicants. SCLL members liked ranking projects individually and then possibly updating scores after hearing a presentation and answers to questions.

One SCLL member suggested establishing a quality cutoff point such that applications scored below a certain point would not be funded even if LSTA funds were available. Any

extra LSTA funds originally geared toward the competitive grants program might then be considered for use in the non-competitive LSTA grants programs (e.g., the Digital Initiative). No SCLL members proposed completely getting rid of the well-established ranking process.

LSTA Proposal and Application Training

The NSLA LSTA Coordinator offered annual voluntary proposal training sessions and mandatory LSTA Application training sessions throughout the evaluation period. In 2011 NSLA held the latter in Carson City, Henderson, and Elko in order to make them more accessible to people in various parts of the state. Those who have taken these workshops ranked them exceptionally well. For example the LSTA Coordinator received exceptional scores of about 95% strong agreement or agreement on clarity of her presentations. She was also specifically complimented in the focus group and survey responses for providing help when asked for it outside of the workshops. One suggestion was for her to use more exercises to help the adult learners in these workshops better understand how to write an effective LSTA grant proposal. Another suggestion was to use more concrete examples during the mandatory workshop that are applicable to those attending. An evaluator observed the use of examples during a training workshop.

About 64% of the respondents had personally participated in an optional LSTA Proposal Writing workshop and 58% in a required LSTA Grant Writing Workshop for applicants. Nevertheless, survey respondents indicated that additional training in the following areas would be "helpful" (62% to 70%) or "very helpful" (15% to 22%): Writing outcomes statements for grant programs (92%), tracking outcomes for grant programs (89%), grant project management (83%), information on Nevada and federal grant guidelines (82%) and grant writing in general (81%).

Process Questions: What have been the important challenges to obtaining and using outcome-based data in relation to the operation of the LSTA program?

What key lessons has the SLAA learned about outcome based evaluation? Include what worked and what should be changed.

Despite librarians having received some training in outcomes-based evaluation during the mandatory LSTA Grant Application workshops, in the final LSTA reports some libraries provided output statistics and fewer provided outcomes evidence. The amount of anecdotal (qualitative) outcomes statements in final reports increased from 2008 to 2009 but there was little and often no quantitative outcomes evaluation evidence provided. Occasionally a library would include what amounted to outcomes statements in the narrative portion of their final report rather than in the outcomes portion of that report.

Both the focus group and survey respondents indicated issues with understanding outcomes-based evaluation and with reporting outcomes within the time frame of an LSTA grant. Responses of survey takers indicated that it was easiest to understand the difference between grant outputs and outcomes, to determine whether the grant succeeded in meeting its outcomes, and to gather data to measure grant outcomes. It was progressively

harder to present grant outcome data, determine an appropriate indicator of a grant outcome, identify an appropriate grant outcome, develop ways to capture outcome indicator data, and analyze the outcome indicator data. Hardest of all (32% difficult or very difficult, 32% neither difficult nor easy, 35% easy or very easy) was to "Set a target level for 'success' of an outcome."

In response to a separate question, 47% of respondents were neutral to very dissatisfied in their library staffs' "understanding of how to report out program outcomes." REAP Change review of LSTA final reports found a noticeable lack of skill in reporting outcomes when these were reported at all. Survey respondents indicated that more specific outcomes based evaluation training would help.

Recommendations

- Continue the proposal, application and ranking process of the competitive grants program.

- Consider working with SCLL members to set minimum ranking levels above which proposals should be funded if LSTA are available, and below which proposals would not be funded, even if LSTA funds are available.

- Given the few Innovation grant applications and the current difficulties of finding matching funds review if that category is still needed.

- Provide more extensive outcomes-based evaluation training, with additional relevant examples and exercises with feedback.

- Consider how to involve more schools or school districts in applying for LSTA grants.

- Engage the SCLL in on-going reviews and discussions on revisions, reallocations and updates to the competitive sub-grant program.

- Consider engaging the SCLL in developing policies and review processes about when statewide initiatives should become non-competitive LSTA funded grant projects instead of being annual NSLA competitive sub-grant proposals.