

V. FEDERAL FUND

B.1 Program – LSTA draft evaluation – Information Item

DRAFT
An Independent Evaluation
Of
Idaho’s Implementation of the
Library Services and Technology Act Grants to
State Programs
2013 - 2017

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Insert Date of Final Draft

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Idaho Commission for Libraries
State of Idaho



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EVALUATION SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Idaho Commission for Libraries' (ICfL) 2013 - 2017 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Five-Year Plan includes five goals that are aligned with three major strategic issues.

1. STRATEGIC ISSUE: ACCESS

What can the Idaho Commission for Libraries do to help Idaho's libraries not only sustain but also equitably and conveniently increase public access to information and library services?

ACCESS (Goal 1.1.): Awareness and understanding of the disparate ways information is accessed and processed create useful and valued library services.

ACCESS (Goal 1.2.): Libraries reach out to all segments of Idaho's populations.

2. STRATEGIC ISSUE: LITERACY

How will the Idaho Commission for Libraries assist libraries to provide Idahoans with equitable access to literacy and learning opportunities in order to be successful in all of life's endeavors?

LITERACY (Goal 2.1.): Libraries flourish as a central place in a learning society.

3. STRATEGIC ISSUE: COMMUNITY ANCHOR

How can the Idaho Commission for Libraries assist all libraries to become valued community anchors within their unique communities?

COMMUNITY ANCHOR (Goal 3.1): The citizens of Idaho identify their libraries as vital.

COMMUNITY ANCHOR (Goal 3.2): ICfL's public stewardship empowers service development and delivery and inspires a passionate commitment to libraries.

A. Retrospective Questions

A-1. To what extent did the Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards each goal? Where progress was not achieved as anticipated, discuss what factors contributed.

The consultants asked the State Librarian and the LSTA Coordinator to offer their personal assessments of progress toward each of the five goals included in ICfL's 2013-2017 Five-Year Plan. Because of the aspirational nature of Idaho's goals, it is unlikely that any of the goals would ever be fully achieved. In recognition of this fact, ICfL's internal assessment was that ICfL had PARTLY ACHIEVED each of their five goals. While the evaluators share the viewpoint that efforts reaching each of the goals requires an ongoing effort, we believe that activities carried out under two of the goal areas are so outstanding that they warrant a rating of

ACHIEVED. Table 1 offers a summary of both ICfL's internal assessments and the evaluator's conclusions.

Table 1: ICfL Self-Assessment and Evaluators' Assessment of Progress on State-Level Goals				
Strategic Issue	Goal	Grants to States Priorities Addressed	ICfL Self- Assessment	Evaluators' Assessment
1. ACCESS	Goal 1.1	1,2,3, & 7	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
	Goal 1.2	5 & 6	Partly Achieved	Achieved
2. LITERACY	Goal 2.1	1,4,5, & 6	Partly Achieved	Achieved
3. COMMUNITY ANCHOR	Goal 3.1	1,3,4,5, & 8	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
	Goal 3.2	1,4,7,8	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved

ACCESS (Goal 1.1): Awareness and understanding of the disparate ways information is accessed and processed create useful and valued library services.

Activities carried out under Goal 1.1. were far-reaching and included staff development for both public and school library staff, training in the effective use of a State-funded suite of databases, as well as support for interlibrary loan activities in the state. The evaluators received several strong indications (primarily through focus groups) that much of the training received has been implemented in local libraries to the benefit of end-users. While work toward reaching this goal is certainly unfinished, significant progress has been made and the evaluators believe that the goal has been PARTLY ACHIEVED.

ACCESS (Goal 1.2): Libraries reach out to all segments of Idaho's populations.

The evaluators believe that Idaho's activities warrant an ACHIEVED rating due primarily to the comprehensive design and excellent implementation of the Read To Me (RTM) program and other early literacy initiatives. This program is built on a solid research base and there is clear evidence that the clearly stated tenets of this program have been internalized by library staff delivering services to young children. Several librarians reported in interviews and focus groups that involvement in the Read To Me program has successfully changed the way library staff approach children's services in general, not just programs that are specifically part of Read To Me. The resulting "purposeful programming" has had a significant impact on preschoolers in a

state that does not require Kindergarten and has influenced programming for older children as well. The evaluation component for Read To Me (and other services to young children) is among the best the evaluators have witnessed. ICfL is attempting to validate a number of assumptions regarding the impact of access to books and purposeful programming using valid and reliable research methods under the guidance of an expert in the field (Dr. Roger Stewart of Boise State University). Other activities carried out under Goal 1.2 including Teen Services and Talking Book Services reach out to other targeted segments of the population.

LITERACY (Goal 2.1): Libraries flourish as a central place in a learning society.

Goals 1.2 and 2.1 are very closely linked. In fact, a majority of activities carried out under Goal 1.2 could as easily been placed under the Literacy Goal (2.1). These activities as well as the Stop the Summer Slide project and the Bright Futures initiative carried out under Goal 2.1 serve to solidify the place of Idaho libraries as centers of learning, especially for children and teens. The evaluators rate the goal ACHIEVED for many of the same reasons we believe ICfL has ACHIEVED Goal 1.2 and because Idaho libraries appear to be strengthening their claim as learning places. While many states do “nice” things with their LSTA Grants to States funding, the evaluators believe that Idaho’s efforts in early literacy is important work worthy of study and replication by other states.

COMMUNITY ANCHOR (Goal 3.1): The citizens of Idaho identify their libraries as vital.

While no specific programs or initiatives that fall directly under Goal 3.1 have been undertaken, the evaluators believe that this goal has been PARTLY ACHIEVED based on the impact that other activities (specifically those carried out under goals 1.2 and 2.1) have had in their communities. While evidence of progress on this goal is largely anecdotal, ICfL is meeting some of the targets outlined in the 2013 – 2017 Plan in spite of the fact that no LSTA dollars have been expended. By becoming central places of learning in their communities (Goal 2.1), Idaho’s libraries have also increased the degree to which they are seen as vital.

COMMUNITY ANCHOR (Goal 3.2): ICfL’s public stewardship empowers service development and delivery and inspires a passionate commitment to libraries.

The evaluators also rate Idaho’s progress on Goal 3.2 as PARTLY ACHIEVED. Focus groups and interviews as well as responses to the web survey support the view that the Idaho Commission for Libraries provides an all too rare combination of leadership and support for libraries. While the primary activity carried out under Goal 3.2 is less than transformative (collection, analysis and dissemination of library statistics is a routine function), evidence supports the conclusion that ICfL both understands and enables libraries to serve the public more effectively.