

## VIII. New Business

### B. Idaho Library Needs Assessment Survey 2026 Executive Summary

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#### Introduction

The Idaho Commission for Libraries launched the online Idaho Library Needs Assessment Survey on February 2, 2026. The survey was open through March 31. The goal of this first phase of the agency's multiyear needs assessment project was to quickly gather actionable feedback from the Idaho library community. This feedback will assist ICfL staff with internal budgeting decisions, starting with State Fiscal Year 2027 (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027).

#### Overview

There were 349 responses to the survey. To encourage honest feedback, responses were anonymous, although limited demographic information was collected.

- Public Library – 257 responses
  - 72 Directors
  - 32 Managers
  - 129 Staff Members
  - 20 Trustees
  - 4 Volunteers
- School Library – 57 responses
  - 12 Directors
  - 12 Managers
  - 33 Staff Members
- Academic Library – 29 responses
  - 7 Directors
  - 4 Managers
  - 18 Staff Members
- Special Library – 3 responses
  - 1 Director
  - 1 Manager
  - 1 Trustee
- Tribal Library – 3 responses
  - 1 Manager
  - 2 Staff Members

#### Most Valued ICfL Services

Respondents were presented with a list of ICfL services and asked to select up to three that are most important to their library and its users. "Grants and financial assistance" was the top priority, with 200 respondents selecting it.

- Grants and Financial Assistance – 200 selections
- In-Person Trainings and Workshops – 124 selections

- Free Physical Book Programs – 124 selections
- Free Physical Kits and Program Materials – 98 selections
- Webinars and Online Trainings or Discussions – 95 selections
- Digital E-Books and Audiobooks – 91 selections

When asked to select up to three grants and financial assistance opportunities most important to their library and its users, four clear standouts emerged.

- Summer STEM – 154 selections
- Kindergarten Readiness – 148 selections
- Continuing Education – 135 selections
- Internet Reimbursements – 109 selections

There were also four clear standouts when respondents were asked to select up to three library field specializations for which they rely most on the ICfL.

- Children’s Services – 173 selections
- Community Outreach and Serving Underserved Populations – 127 selections
- Library Management and Operations – 109 selections
- Technology Services and Support – 100 selections

### **The Necessity of the ICfL**

Respondents indicated the importance of ICfL programs and services in addressing their users’ needs. The aggregated results of these related questions illustrate the need for the funding and training provided by the ICfL.

- Q: To what extent does your library’s current annual funding allow you to meet library user needs?
  - Fully meets need – 21.8%
  - Partially meets need – 66.3%
  - Does not meet needs – 11.7%
- Q: My library regularly seeks additional funding through grants, monetary awards, and/or fundraising to provide services not covered by our annual budget.
  - Yes – 86%
  - No – 14%
- Q: My library regularly seeks outside funding for training and/or free training opportunities for our staff.
  - Yes – 74%
  - No – 26%
- Q: To what extent does your library rely on ICfL grants and monetary awards?
  - A great deal – 30.1%
  - A moderate amount – 33%
  - A small amount – 26.1%
  - Not at all – 8.3%
  - Not applicable – 2.6%
- Q: To what extent does your library rely on ICfL free training programs?

- A great deal – 41.5%
- A moderate amount – 33.8%
- A small amount – 19.2%
- Not at all – 3.2%
- Not applicable – 2.3%

### **Barriers to Participation**

Respondents were asked which barriers made it difficult for them to participate in an ICfL program in the past 12 months. “Lack of time” was the most selected barrier, with 178 respondents selecting this option.

- Lack of time – 178 selections
- Limited staffing – 123 selections
- Not aware of opportunities – 92 selections
- Unable to travel to event – 88 selections

### **Open-ended Responses**

The survey included three optional open-ended questions that allowed respondents to share additional feedback beyond the mandatory quantitative questions. Staff identified and coded keywords for the responses to each question to permit further analysis.

The 106 responses to the question asking about additional ICfL-provided programs or services that should be prioritized that weren’t captured in prior questions were varied. The three most common programs or services identified were library consulting, the Read to Me program, and training for library staff.

When asked to list the top three unmet needs in their community that the library cannot address, the 168 responses most frequently identified staffing and facilities. Unmet needs relating to collections, health, and programming were also frequently cited.

Of the 137 responses to the final question seeking any additional feedback, the overwhelming majority expressed gratitude for the ICfL and its staff. Other common feedback referenced the value and importance of ICfL’s continuing education and training opportunities.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

This first phase of our multiyear needs assessment project reaffirms the ICfL’s focus on providing financial assistance to Idaho libraries and training for Idaho library staff and trustees. Given the primary participation barriers of time and staffing constraints, the ICfL staff and leadership will prioritize developing grant applications and providing training opportunities to address these obstacles.

The ICfL’s budget was set for the State Fiscal Year 2027 with a 5% reduction. ICfL leadership anticipates maintaining existing programs and services at close to current levels. The ICfL will continue gathering valuable feedback through additional needs assessment mechanisms to ensure sufficient data and analysis to guide updated strategic priorities and resource allocation.

The next phases of the multiyear needs assessment are still in the planning phase and will resume following the onboarding of the new deputy state librarian. In conjunction with internally led and contracted activities, such as focus groups and listening sessions, the ICfL is in the process of contracting for an evaluation of the LSTA Five-Year State Plan as required by IMLS. This evaluation is due by March 30, 2027. Informed by the evaluation and needs assessment work, the ICfL is required to submit a new LSTA Five-Year State Plan to IMLS by June 30, 2027.