

*Creating a Nation of Learners*



INSTITUTE of  
**Museum and Library**  
SERVICES



## **Grants to States Webinar:** Q&A about the Five-Year Evaluation Guidelines

**Matthew Birnbaum**

Research & Evaluation Officer

# Agenda

- Context
- Report Overview
- Follow-Up
- Q&A



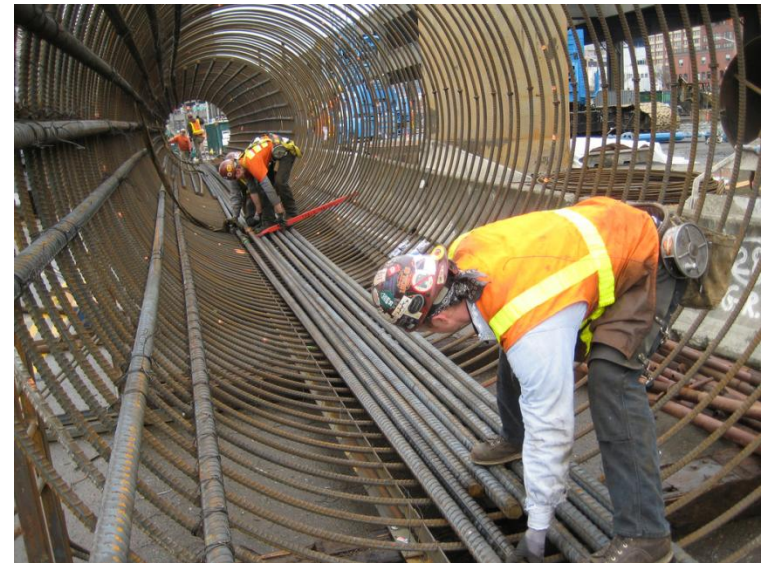
# Context



# Improving Results-Based Management (Outcome-Based Evaluation and Planning)

## Guiding Principles

1. Changes must lead to:
  - greater transparency
  - better accountability
  - improved program management
2. The protocols must work at both the national level and within the jurisdictions of the SLAAs.
3. Process must be “bottom-up” with SLAAs and IMLS collaborating together.



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



- We are in a overlapping, three-phase transition period to revise results-based management (aka outcome-based evaluation) protocols over two years.
  - Process started at last month's conference in March 2011 and will continue through March 2013.
- The five-year evaluation reports (FY 2007-FY 2012) are due in the middle of this transition (March 2012).

# Three Overlapping Phases for Changing the Evaluation Protocols

Phase	Objective	Deliverables	Timeline
Planning	Develop better clarity of what activities lead to what results	Planning document	March 2011-September 2011
Piloting	Test the new evaluation protocols in the evaluation plan	New IT system; new reporting templates	July 2011-September 2012
Transition	Begin full-scale implementation of new evaluation protocols	Full-scale adoption of new reporting	March 2012- <i>June 2012</i> March 2013

Evaluation guidelines are announced

Evaluation reports and next five-year plans are due

# Five-Year Evaluation Report Overview

1. Terminology
2. Overall objectives
3. Retrospective questions
4. Process questions
5. Prospective questions
6. Evaluation methodology
7. Independent evaluation requirements
8. Smart consumers



# 1. Terminology

- **Priority:** One of the focal areas identified in the IMLS authorization.
- **Strategy:** A plan of action involving allocation of resources to achieving at least one result.
  - A strategy contains at least one activity.
  - Strategies and activities involve policies, programs, and projects.
- **Implementation:** The process for administering any activity or strategy.
- **Results-based management (outcome-based evaluation and planning):** A type of management process that relies on assessing results from enacting and implementing strategies for guiding future decisions.
  - Performance metrics (outcome-based data) are a common component in results-based management.
- **Evaluation:** The art of systematically collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about the results from enacting and implementing strategies (and their activities) in policies, programs and projects.
- **Evaluation methodology:** A set of qualitative or quantitative research methods used in an evaluation.



## 2. Evaluation Report Objectives

- Section 9134 (c) of IMLS' authorizing legislation directs SLAAs to "independently evaluate, and report to the (IMLS) Director regarding, the activities assisted under this subchapter, prior to the end of the 5-year plan."
- Guidelines focus on more direct links between five-year SLAA evaluations and next five-year plans as we transition to improved results-based management practices for enabling better assessments at national and state/jurisdictional levels.
- The linkage is made around three sets of questions:
  1. Highlight effective past practices ("Retrospective Questions").
  2. Identify processes at work in implementing the activities in the plan, including the use of performance-based measurements in planning, policy making, and administration ("Process Questions").
  3. Develop key findings and recommendations from evaluating the past five years for inclusion in the next five year planning cycle ("Prospective Questions").

# 3. Retrospective Questions

1. Did the activities undertaken through the state's LSTA plan achieve results related to priorities identified in the Act?
  - (a) To what extent were these results due to choices made in the selection of strategies and to what extent did these results relate to subsequent implementation?
2. To what extent did programs and services benefit targeted individuals and groups?



# 4. Process Questions

1. Were modifications made to the SLAA's plan? If so, please specify whether they were informed by performance metrics.
2. If modifications were made to the SLAA's plan, how were performance metrics used in guiding those decisions?
3. How have performance metrics been used to guide policy and managerial decisions affecting SLAA's LSTA supported programs and services?
4. What have been important challenges to using outcome-based data to guide policy and managerial decisions over the past five years?

# 5. Prospective Questions

1. How will lessons learned about improving the use of results-based management inform the state's next five year plan?
  - (a) How does the SLAA plan to share performance metrics and other evaluation-related information within and outside of the SLAA to inform policy and administrative decisions during the next five years?
  - (b) How can the performance data collected and analyzed to date be used to identify benchmarks in the upcoming five-year plan?
2. What key lessons has the SLAA learned about using outcome-based evaluation that other States could benefit from knowing? Include what worked and what should be changed.

# *Optional Prospective Questions*

The following questions are intended to help SLAAs jump start their five-year PLANNING process. SLAAs will need to consider these questions systematically in the upcoming five-year plan. They may also address these questions in the evaluation if it seems appropriate.

1. What are the major challenges and opportunities that the SLAA and its partners can address to make outcome-based data more useful to federal and state policy makers as well as other stakeholders?
2. Based on the findings from the evaluation, include recommendations for justifying the continuation, expansion and/or adoption of promising programs in the next five-year plan.
3. Based on the findings from the evaluation, include recommendations for justifying the potential cuts and/or elimination of programs in the next five-year plan.

# 6. Evaluation Methodology



# Types of Evaluation Data Sources

- Administrative Documents:
  - Strategic and other plans
  - Budgets
  - Memos
  - Legislation, administrative rule changes
  - Correspondence
- Administrative data (e.g. agency performance metrics, SPR data)
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Surveys
- Published evaluations and other studies (e.g. audits)
- Printed media (e.g. newspaper stories, PSAs)
- Photos, pictures, video
- Audio transcripts

# Types of Data Analysis in Evaluations

- Quantitative Analysis
  - Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, medians, quartiles, distributions)
  - Inferential statistics
- Qualitative Analysis
  - Coding
  - “Content analysis”
  - “Exemplars”
- “Combined Methods” Analysis
  - Surveys (closed-ended and open-ended questions)
  - Case studies



# Evaluation Methodological Strategies

1. Let the type of question direct the type of method to use.
  - Some questions are best answered with quantitative methods.
  - Some questions are best answered with qualitative methods.
  - Some questions are best answered with combined methods.
  - Many questions are best answered by mixing the methods.
2. The IMLS guidance memo offers advice on the sources of data and the types of analysis to use to answer the various questions.
3. Remember the adage, “Keep it Simple, Stupid” (KISS)
  - Descriptive statistics suffice for most types of quantitative analysis.
  - Content analyses suffice for most types of qualitative analysis.

# 7. Independent Evaluations

- Independent evaluations are rigorous and objective (carried out free from outside influence).
- IMLS Authorization requires “independent” evaluations.
- The independent evaluations can be done in-house if those conducting the evaluations are not directly reportable to those with managerial responsibilities for LSTA-funded services.
- Thus, the evaluations can be done by competent third-parties or in-house if there are adequate organizational arrangements/resources.
- Institutional Review Boards are used to ensure that the proposed evaluation methods adequately protect “human subjects.”
  - These boards are comprised of peers with adequate training in the various evaluation methods.
  - If your organization does not have an IRB, contact Carlos or Matt at IMLS for feedback.
- For further assistance, review the ethical guidelines of the American Evaluation Association (included in Guidelines Document).

## 8. Be Smart Consumers with the Evaluators

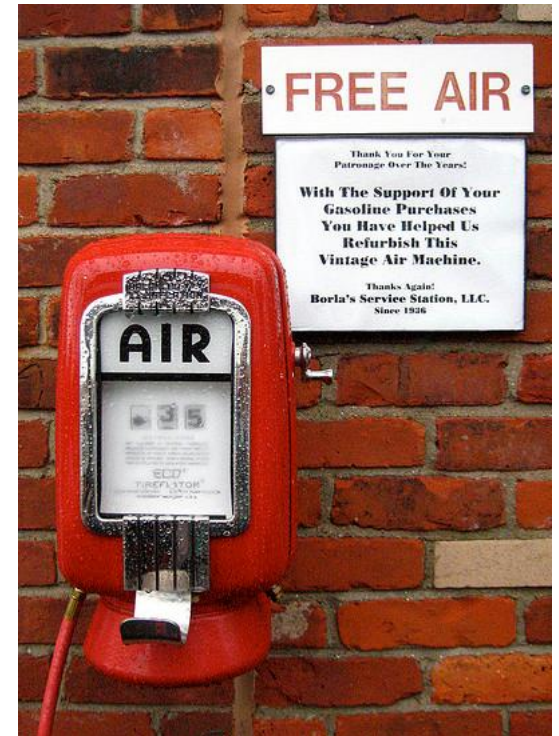
- Develop a good evaluation plan before the evaluation starts. Get the important questions answered upfront (see Guidance Document for specific issues to address).
- Make sure the evaluators let you know about the implications of their methodological and other choices affecting their understandings.
- Make sure that they are transparent so that some other evaluator could presumably copy the protocols they followed and obtain the same results.
- Balance your agency needs with those of other stakeholders; let the concern for the larger public interest drive any conflicts.
- Use results-based management principles in working with them. Set up key deliverables and interact with them incrementally around these milestones.
- Do not hesitate to contact IMLS for help and assistance.

# Organization of Report

- See Guidance Document for requested organization of report.
- This organization follows traditional formats for these types of evaluation reports.
- IMLS will be much better able to tell the national story if each SLAA follows this organization.
- There is a brief executive summary that is intended for key actors who do not have time to read the whole report.
- The body of the report is to be no more than 25 pages.
- Appendices are fine for providing more detailed output and protocols used in conducting the studies.
  - The appendices provide a place for others to learn more about a particular point made in the narrative.
  - The appendices also provide a place for others to learn more about the methodological choices made by the evaluators.
  - The appendices serve as depositories for helping improve the next generation of evaluations.

# Follow-Up

- IMLS additional documents (on Extranet):
  - Evaluation Guidance
  - Further Evaluation Guidance
  - FAQ (soon to be posted)
- Wiki
- Contact IMLS program and research/evaluation staff for questions:
  - Matt Birnbaum:  
[mbirnbaum@imls.gov](mailto:mbirnbaum@imls.gov)  
202-653-4760
  - Carlos Manjarrez:  
[cmanjarrez@imls.gov](mailto:cmanjarrez@imls.gov)
- Stay tuned for announcement regarding the next webinars in continuing the planning for the new protocols.



# Questions?

