Alabama Public Library Service
Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)
Grants to States Program Implementation Evaluation
FFY 2018 - FFY 2022

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APLS

INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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EVALUATION SUMMARY

Summary Introduction

The Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) is a state agency that serves the public libraries in the 67 counties in Alabama. The agency is empowered to aid and advise all established public libraries and assist communities that wish to establish public libraries. APLS administers state

Public Library Outlets by Locale

42% Rural
20% Town
17% Suburb
21% City
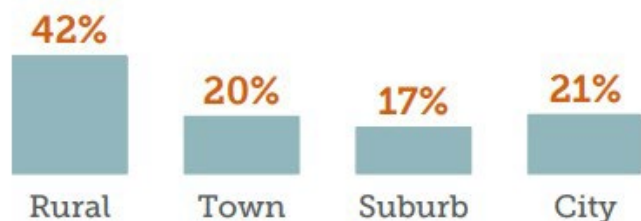
funds as provided by the State Legislature and federal funds as provided by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). The ultimate goal of the Alabama Public Library Service is to create a statewide network of libraries to provide quality library service to every individual in the state. Alabama has a total of 225 public library jurisdictions employing 768 FTE librarians based on the 2019 PLS survey. Total full-time equivalent staff is about 1,700 in 300+ public library outlets, the majority of them working in rural branches (42%).[1]

Given Alabama's population of 5,024,279[2], the state's annual Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States[3] program allotment from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) of approximately $2.6[4] million per year translates into $0.52[5] per person on an annual basis. LSTA funds alone are inadequate to meet the library and information needs of Alabama's approximately five million residents. APLS thus faces the challenge of finding ways to make $0.52 per person transformative in terms of library services. This relatively small amount of money must be effectively leveraged to accomplish major results through the strategic deployment of funds and the acquisition of other public and private monies in support of top-quality library and information services.

There are three goal statements in the Alabama Public Library Service's LSTA five-year plan, which is entitled ***Alabama Public Library Service Library Services and Technology Act Five***

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[1] https://www.imls.gov/data/data-catalog/public-libraries-survey/fy-2017-pls-state-profiles

[2] United States Census Bureau, Decennial Census (April 1, 2020)

[3] The report will refer to the Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States program simply as LSTA throughout this report

[4] Four-year LSTA Grants to States allotment average ((FFY [Federal Fiscal Year] 2018 State Allotment + FFY 2019 State Allotment + FFY 2020 State Allotment + FFY 2021 State Allotment) / 4)

[5] Four-year LSTA Grants to States allotment average / United States Census Bureau Decennial Census (April 1, 2020)

Year Plan: FY2018-2022 (October 1, 2017 - September 30, 2022). They serve 225 libraries and they are:

> **GOAL 1: Strengthen the capacity, staff expertise and board effectiveness of Alabama public libraries through training, continuing education, and other learning and networking opportunities for library staff and trustees in order to advance the delivery of library and information services.**
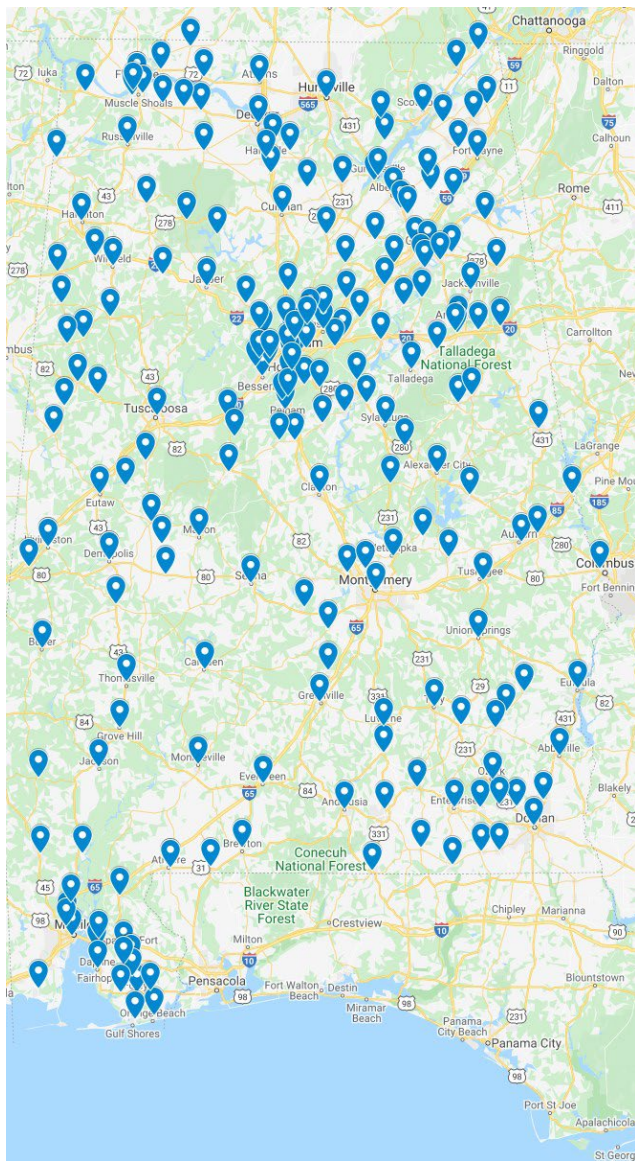
GOAL 2: Support library programs, services, collections and partnerships that promote learning and literacy; serve children, youth, adults and families, including underserved populations; and enhance education, civic engagement, cultural opportunities and economic vitality of Alabama and its residents.

GOAL 3: Provide information access to all populations through the provision of statewide access to electronic resources and cooperative services, enabling technology, and increased public awareness and use of libraries for information access, knowledge, ideas and cultural heritage.

Agency's Internal Assessment and Evaluators' Assessment

As part of the assessment process, the evaluators asked the APLS Director, the APLS LSTA Coordinator and other key staff members identified by the director to offer their joint appraisal of progress their agency had made toward achieving each of the three goals included in APLS' 2018-2022 five-year plan. The evaluators prefaced their request for this internal assessment by noting the fact that the state was only three years into the implementation of the five-year plan. Consequently, it was acknowledged that it was unlikely that any of the goals would be fully achieved.

Upon further investigation with focus groups, interviews, and surveys, the evaluators concluded their own independent assessment. All focus groups and interviews were conducted virtually; two trips to Alabama were planned and canceled due to the emergence of COVID-19 variants.

However, our virtual interactions were rich and varied, with large group gatherings and more intimate small group discussions taking place over Zoom. The smaller groups in particular allowed the evaluators to tour specific libraries in Alabama via Google Maps, photos, and explanations from trustees and librarians of their local environments. Participants were eager to share their experiences and explain how the libraries are supported and how their offerings support the community members. Table 1 offers a summary of both the Alabama Public Library Service's internal assessment and the evaluators' conclusions.

Table 1 - Alabama Public Library Service's and Evaluators' Assessment of Achievement		
GOAL	**APLS' Internal Assessment**	**Evaluators' Assessment**
GOAL 1: Strengthen the capacity, staff expertise and board effectiveness of Alabama public libraries through training, continuing education, and other learning and networking opportunities for library staff and trustees in order to advance the delivery of library and information services.	Achieved	Achieved
GOAL 2: Support library programs, services, collections and partnerships that promote learning and literacy; serve children, youth, adults and families, including underserved populations; and enhance education, civic engagement, cultural opportunities and economic vitality of Alabama and its residents.	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
GOAL 3: Provide information access to all populations through the provision of statewide access to electronic resources and cooperative services, enabling technology, and increased public awareness and use of libraries for information access, knowledge, ideas and cultural heritage.	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved

GOAL 1: Strengthen the capacity, staff expertise and board effectiveness of Alabama public libraries through training, continuing education, and other learning and networking opportunities for library staff and trustees in order to advance the delivery of library and information services.

Goal 1 expenditures represented 6.9 percent of Alabama's total LSTA allotment for the FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 period. These expenditures covered three projects, all of which continued from the prior LSTA funding cycle and carried through the three years of evaluation in the current cycle. *Consulting Services* accounted for six (6) percent of funding over the three-year period. *Professional Training* and *New Directors Orientation* accounted for less than one (1) percent of the funding each. These were the activities that were important for coalescing the library community, even though they did not take place physically in the same way as they did prior to COVID-19. These programs kept the library staff community engaged in discussing the

issues they faced and ways to cope and overcome them. Thus, even though some direct expenses (generally those tied up by in-person networking) were not incurred from the virtual meetings during the pandemic, the ***impact of the presence of the consultants and the ability of APLS to connect with the library staff across the state has been greater than ever before. At times of crisis, all the eyes were turned to APLS and the library consultants for direction and guidance, enabling APLS to centralize its messaging and its resources.***

Goal 1 focuses on library capacity and relates to the IMLS intent to strengthen both libraries and library staff. APLS has been heavily involved in training library staff, ensuring that the latest developments in the profession are spread throughout Alabama (for example, the recent wave of doing away with library fines made headline news in some libraries in Alabama as well). Alabama also has notable libraries – the [B. B. Comer Memorial Library](#) was a National Award Medal Winner back in 2000 and continues to this day to apply for IMLS grants and implement innovations in library service delivery. Staff regularly brainstorm and stay in touch with community members to ensure they pursue the projects that are of greatest interest to the community. Libraries correspond with consultants at the agency, and consultants visit the local libraries regularly to facilitate the exchange of ideas and support professional development. Training sessions are also provided to library directors and trustees on a regular basis.

The evaluators conclude that the Alabama Public Library Service has ACHIEVED Goal 1. The resilience with which the LSTA subgrant process continued during the pandemic and the continuing support offered by consultants were mentioned multiple times throughout our conversations. Libraries in Alabama rely on APLS training to train their leaders. Although most want in-person meetings to resume, APLS makes every effort to offer virtual programs effectively and assist libraries with poor broadband connectivity. Some libraries still connect only by phone for broadband, which is not as robust, and our meetings almost inevitably had one or two libraries connecting via phone. Continuing to educate library staff on the use of technology and making them comfortable in sharing information via a combination of phone (at times) and computer has been critical to the achievement of this goal. The evaluators also note that this goal is important to continue to achieve in future years.

GOAL 2: Support library programs, services, collections and partnerships that promote learning and literacy; serve children, youth, adults and families, including underserved populations; and enhance education, civic engagement, cultural opportunities and economic vitality of Alabama and its residents.

Goal 2 expenditures represented 80 percent of Alabama's total LSTA allotment for the FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 period. Three projects were in double digits - **Resource Sharing and Access** (31.17 percent), **Blind and Physically Handicapped** (19.3 percent), and **Collection Development** (12.46 percent) - for their shares of the total LSTA allotment. **Online Tutoring** (9.79 percent) was also close to this level of investment. Goal 2 for Alabama was a blend of content and access – it included programs that supported the purchase of content (databases such as HomeworkAlabama and Ancestry Library Edition among others), as well as projects that focused on programming (such as summer library programs and STEM kits are some

examples). Goal 2 covered a wide range of activities; its programs also had some very ambitious specific targets, such as increasing program offerings by two (2) percent every year. Furthermore, the plan specifically mentioned the implementation of a baseline survey to monitor and achieve specific levels of satisfaction. Goal 2 programs specifically set growth targets that were understandably impossible to achieve under the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was no regular annual survey implemented, although evaluation data on certain program offerings was gathered based on specific IMLS questions. Providing expanded access to resources like HomeworkAlabama and Ancestry Library Edition helped libraries establish themselves as key contributors to recovery during a pandemic. Trends like the posting of useful resources around COVID-19 on public library websites is another way the public libraries in Alabama proved their value to their communities in the last two years of the pandemic. The evaluators believe that the Alabama Public Library Service has PARTLY ACHIEVED Goal 2.

GOAL 3: Provide information access to all populations through the provision of statewide access to electronic resources and cooperative services, enabling technology, and increased public awareness and use of libraries for information access, knowledge, ideas and cultural heritage.

Goal 3 expenditures represented almost 13 percent (12.99 percent) of Alabama's total LSTA allotment for the FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 period. Four projects accounted for all the expenses under this goal, with **Technology Upgrade** being the only project in the double digits (10.39 percent) of the total allotment. Goal 3 had specific measurable targets set in the pre-COVID era that assumed a growth economy for libraries. Targets included three (3) percent annual growth of statewide resources and seven (7) percent annual growth of user satisfaction. It assumed implementation of baseline surveys and annual follow up on connectivity. Lastly, it set a five (5) percent growth benchmark for awareness of library services. Again, COVID-19 impeded APLS' ability to implement and monitor the baseline survey and monitoring tools for these targets. Furthermore, the closings of libraries and the reduction in the usage of physical spaces has been negatively affecting awareness and satisfaction. Despite this, and more than ever before, the need for civic spaces like libraries to be ready to emerge into the post-pandemic world is critical. On the plus side, broadband in households is gradually increasing patrons' ability to access online resources. The evaluators believe that the Alabama Public Library Service has PARTLY ACHIEVED Goal 3.

A-2. Appendix F summarizes all the focal areas and intents APLS projects address. The majority of the projects address the top three focal areas and associated intents.

A-3. The APLS services have a substantial focus on almost all the groups identified in the Target Population list (the only exception is immigration and refugees).

Coming back from the pandemic, libraries need to ensure that they are well positioned to meet basic service. This includes having enough people to maintain their buildings and balancing the running of some on-site programs with a robust virtual/online catalog of offerings. Being able to function simultaneously and equally effectively in virtual and physical environments will be critical in the coming years.

EVALUATION REPORT

"LSTA funding makes public libraries possible! It fulfills the basic need of money for growth, whether it be actual brick and mortar, collections, technology, programming, and more. This funding is absolutely necessary for public libraries so that they are able to serve the citizens of their communities." - Adult Services Manager

Evaluation Introduction

The pandemic has presented unavoidable challenges to libraries while also providing opportunities for new library services to emerge. During our numerous, frequent virtual interactions with public libraries in Alabama, we asked librarians to reflect upon some of the services they were not able to complete due to the pandemic (backlog), some of the things they are currently doing, and some of the things they accomplished despite the challenge of COVID-19. These observations were shared with us on virtual boards.

Figure 1: Share things the pandemic prevented you from accomplishing (Backlog), what you are currently doing, and what you already completed during COVID-19
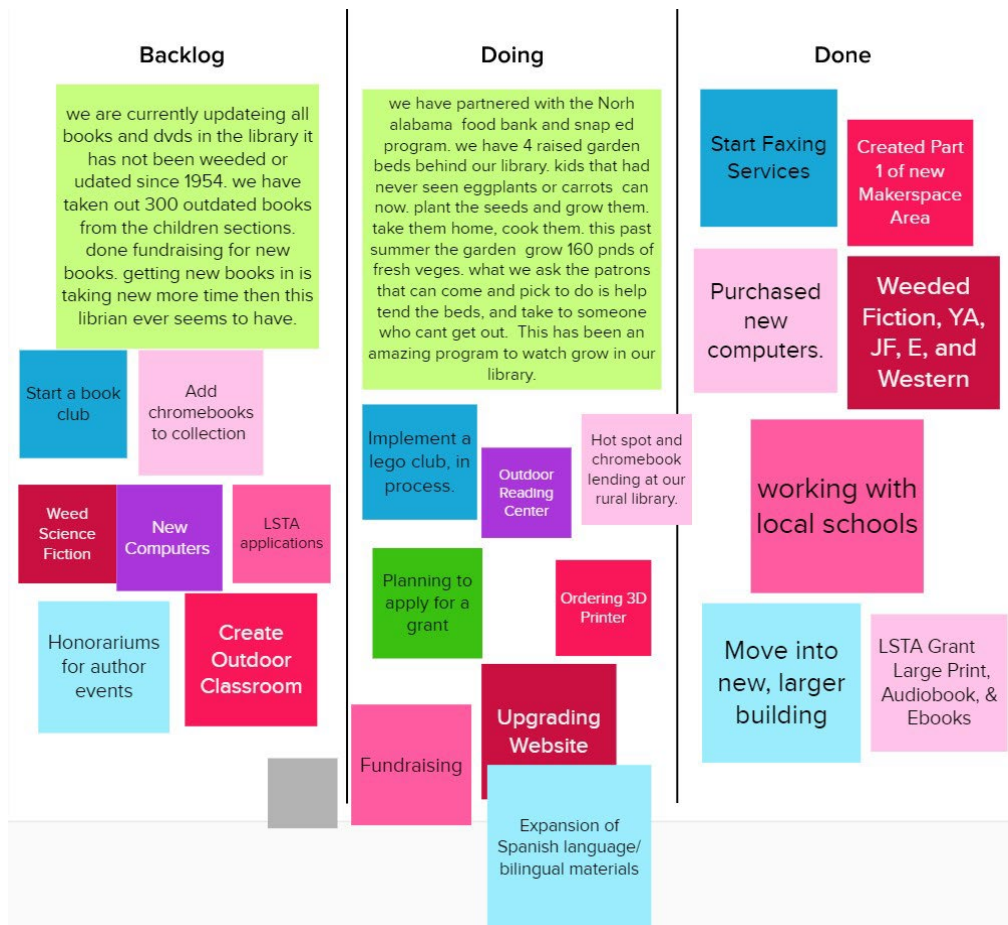
These mural boards provided useful insights into the challenges libraries faced; often, with the library building closed to the public, opportunities to weed the collection emerged (sometimes successfully completed and other times still needing more time and effort to be completed). Opportunities to partner with schools was an idea that surfaced again and again. Because schools were closed during the pandemic, the tutoring services and electronic books provided by libraries were increasingly important. Though learning loss is a well-documented consequence of the pandemic, it is reasonable to consider much more severe the loss would have been without libraries providing all of the electronic content and services they made available during this time. Alabama was selected to participate in Year 3 of "Reimagining School Readiness" training with the Bay Area Discovery Museum. This program supports early learning in public libraries for children from birth to age 8 in order to help close the gap for children who do not attend preschool. The need for such a program is even more critical now because of the additional learning gaps due to COVID-19.

Some libraries in Alabama moved into new (and larger) buildings, as is noted on the board

HomeworkAlabama.org™

Free Homework Help, Tutoring and Test Prep for Alabamians!

sticky notes, even during the pandemic. With the closure of public library buildings around the state, many of them began (or enhanced) their virtual programming activities. APLS also provided access to expanded hours to **Homework Alabama** and remote access to **Ancestry Library Edition (ALE),** thus serving the needs of the young and old.

Libraries, as indicated on the sticky notes, were even more attuned to the needs of the underserved; they acted on these needs by adding more Spanish-language materials to their collections, upgrading their websites, raising funds, applying for grants, etc. The purchase of new technology and additional equipment, as well as hotspots, was a critical upgrade undertaken by many libraries and supported by the state agency during the pandemic. APLS remained open and available during the pandemic and the staff utilized the state-supported Webex platform to continue communications and community engagement during these challenging times. The LSTA funds supported all three goals through the well-established activities and projects that APLS has had in place.

Given Alabama's population of 5,024,279[6], the state's annual Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grants to States[7] program allotment from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) of approximately $2.6[8] million per year translates into $0.52[9] per person on an annual basis. LSTA funds alone are inadequate to meet the library and information needs of Alabama's approximately five million residents. APLS thus faces the challenge of finding ways to make $0.52 per person transformative in terms of library services. This relatively small amount of money must be effectively leveraged to accomplish major results through the strategic deployment of funds and the acquisition of other public and private monies in support of top-quality library and information services.

There are three goal statements in Alabama's five-year LSTA plan entitled *Alabama Public Library Service Library Services and Technology Act Five-Year Plan: FY2018-2022 (October 1, 2017 - September 30, 2022)*. Each of the goals is stated below and LSTA-funded activities carried out in support of the goal are described. Finally, the evaluators' assessment of whether each goal has been achieved, partly achieved, or not achieved is presented.

Goal 1 Retrospective Assessment: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL 1: Strengthen the capacity, staff expertise and board effectiveness of Alabama public libraries through training, continuing education, and other learning and networking opportunities for library staff and trustees in order to advance the delivery of library and information services.

Alabama continued to fund consulting services to help investigate the best and most comprehensive strategies for educating personnel. There was also significant investment in workshops for professional training; this proved prescient given the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. New Directors Orientations continued in their previously established small groups, although virtually rather than in person. The virtual meetings gave new directors a chance to learn and to network. In an effort to provide comprehensive trustee training, a subscription to the United Libraries' "Short Takes for Trustees" video series was made available to library trustees statewide.

This goal meets a number of important needs as identified in the 2018-2022 plan:

•   Over 60 percent of Alabama public libraries are led by a director without an MLS/MLIS degree and 10 percent of public library director positions turn over every year. There is a need

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[6] United States Census Bureau, Decennial Census (April 1, 2020)

[7] The report will refer to the Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States program simply as LSTA

[8] Four-year LSTA Grants to States allotment average ((FFY [Federal Fiscal Year] 2018 State Allotment + FFY 2019 State Allotment + FFY 2020 State Allotment + FFY 2021 State Allotment) / 4)

[9] Four-year LSTA Grants to States allotment average / United States Census Bureau Decennial Census (April 1, 2020)

for basic library education and for increasing the overall number of degreed librarians in the state, while also serving the needs of those requiring more advanced continuing education programs

• Over 20 percent of Alabama public libraries have a single staff member; 30 percent are open fewer than 40 hours a week; and 55 percent serve populations of less than 10,000 people. There is a need for networking among isolated staff and for building knowledgeable trustees

• The highest-ranked response among respondents from all sizes of libraries to the 2018 survey question "What can APLS do to assist Alabama libraries?" was a request to meet the need for more continuing education across a range of topics.

Goal 1 Description and Discussion

Following are the titles of the projects and the total amount of LSTA FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 funding that was expended on activities undertaken in support of Goal 1.

Goal 1 Projects & Expenditures: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT TITLE/ Activities	THREE YEAR (FFY 2018, FFY 2019, FFY 2020) EXPENDITURE TOTAL
Consulting Services (2018, 2019, 2020)	$471,519
Professional Training (2018, 2019, 2020)	$54,164
New Directors Orientation (2018, 2019)	$6,191
GOAL SUBTOTAL	$531,875

Goal 1 expenditures represent 6.9 percent of Alabama's total LSTA allotment for the FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 period. These expenditures cover three projects, all of which continued from the prior LSTA funding cycle and carried through the three years of evaluation in the current cycle. *Consulting Services* accounts for six (6) percent of funding over the three-year period. *Professional Training* and *New Directors Orientation* accounted for less than one (1) percent each. These were the activities that were important for coalescing the library community, even though they did not take place physically in the same way as they did prior to COVID-19. These programs kept the community of libraries and library staff engaged in discussing the issues they faced and ways to cope and overcome them. Thus, even though some direct expenses (generally those tied up by in-person networking) were not incurred due to the need for virtual meetings during the pandemic, the ***impact of the presence of the consultants and the ability of APLS to connect with the library staff across the state has been greater than ever before. For at times of crisis, all the eyes were turned to APLS and the library consultants for direction and guidance.***

Consulting Services expanded the ability of librarians around the state (most of whom are located in rural areas) to better provide for their patrons. The APLS Consultant Division is composed of six professional librarians with various library backgrounds (including public, academic, and special). Their specialties allowed them to form a strong team with diverse knowledge, which helped them assist Alabama's public libraries with many different issues in their communities. APLS staff members are responsible for libraries located in various districts around the state and develop intimate knowledge and the ability to offer one-on-one service to public libraries. APLS also pushes out nationwide initiatives when applicable (i.e., STEM, STEAM, MakerSpaces) and ensures that new programs emerging from the American Library Association (ALA) get disseminated throughout library communities in Alabama.

Providing training to public library staff and trustees strengthens service opportunities within the communities they serve and allows them to disseminate information about current trends to their library patrons. Expanded service to communities results in improved access to library materials, programs, and public computer service. Most of the libraries are located in low-income, rural areas where the library is the main source of free materials and Internet access. Several areas have been hit hard by the closure of local businesses during the pandemic, effectively cutting off valuable funding resources, making libraries even more essential for helping residents find employment to support their families. In some cases, libraries on the brink of closure have remained open due in part to the provision of consulting services. Newly established libraries are also provided with guidance and information about compliance with the State Code of Alabama regarding public libraries, Alabama Ethics Law, Alabama Open Meetings Act, State Bid Law, etc., and federal laws (CIPA, LSTA, E-Rate, etc.). Consulting activity did see a decline (51 percent since 2018) due to COVID-19; however, these services are more critical than ever before with libraries turning to APLS for guidance regarding closures, virtual programming, and being impactful while buildings are less busy during the pandemic.

In 2018, professional training opportunities were provided for four library staff members in the following counties: Jefferson, Lauderdale, Mobile, and Shelby. Staff received a grant for the Fall 2017 through Summer 2018 academic year in the MLS/MLIS program at the University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies. In 2019, professional training opportunities were provided for eight library staff members in the following counties: Butler, Calhoun, Etowah, Jefferson, Marshall, and Shelby. Staff received a grant for the Fall 2018 through Summer 2019 academic year in the MLS/MLIS program at the University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies. Also in 2019, three workshops ("Understanding Community Audiences and Developing and Delivering Effective Messages") led by national consultants were held around the state and were attended by 135 librarians. In 2020, professional training opportunities were provided for five library staff members in the following counties: Butler, Calhoun, Limestone, Marshall, and Shelby. Staff received a grant for the Fall 2019 through Summer 2020 academic year in the MLIS program at the University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies. Because of constant changes in technology, law, and social conditions, there is a constant need for training and re-training library staff to provide the best library service possible.

Alabama Project Stats	2018	2019	2020
Consulting Services			
# site visits and consultations	8,061	4,744	4,116
Professional Training			
# libraries participating	**4**	8	**5**
New Directors Orientation			
# new library directors attending	9	8	NA

New Directors Orientation programs were held at APLS for public library directors who had five years or less experience working in their library. Participants had the opportunity to learn useful skills and to network with other leaders in the library field. In FFY 2018, nine library directors attended from the following counties: Baldwin, Dale, DeKalb, Jefferson, Marshall, Mobile, and Morgan. The service populations for the libraries range from 70 to 84,970 residents. In FFY 2019, eight library directors attended from the following counties: Chilton, Houston, Jefferson, Lauderdale, Marengo, Marshall, and Shelby. The service populations for the libraries range from 2,015 to 659,300 residents. The conference programs included library promotion, programming, policy development, long-range planning, legal compliance, statistics, personnel, programming ideas, grants (LSTA and others), E-Rate, working with trustees, reference service, services to the disabled, and other subjects. After this intensive learning experience, library staff became more familiar with the importance of their libraries in their communities and said they felt more confident in their roles as library leaders. They also said they felt supported and were glad to know of the assistance available as they acclimated to their busy libraries. Holding workshops and evaluation data after such events is another way of finding out more about the efficacy of library operations around the state of Alabama. No new director orientations were offered in FFY 2020.

<u>Goal 1 Conclusion - Retrospective Question A-1</u>
A-1. To what extent did APLS' Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards Goal 1?

The evaluators conclude that the Alabama Public Library Service has ACHIEVED Goal 1. The resilience with which the LSTA subgrant process continued during the pandemic and the continuing support offered by consultants were mentioned multiple times throughout our conversations. Libraries in Alabama rely on APLS training to train their leaders. Although most want in-person meetings to resume, APLS makes every effort to offer virtual programs effectively and assist libraries with poor broadband connectivity. Some libraries still connect only by phone for broadband, which is not as robust, and our meetings almost inevitably had one or two libraries connecting via phone. Continuing to educate library staff on the use of technology and making them comfortable in sharing information via a combination of phone (at

times) and computer has been critical to the achievement of this goal. The evaluators also note that this goal is important to continue to achieve in future years.

Goal 2 Retrospective Assessment: *LIFELONG LEARNING*

GOAL 2: Support library programs, services, collections and partnerships that promote learning and literacy; serve children, youth, adults and families, including underserved populations; and enhance education, civic engagement, cultural opportunities and economic vitality of Alabama and its residents.

Goal 2 meets the following needs identified in the plan:

- Alabama demographics support the need for information access, programming and services for a variety of constituencies. Note that the percentage of families and individuals in all age groups living in poverty exceeds national averages. The percentage of veterans and individuals with disabilities exceeds the national averages. Education attainment is lower than national averages for both high school and college degrees.

- Multiple studies document the positive impact of summer library programs on students' retention of reading skills during the summer vacation.

- Stakeholder input gathered during focus groups in the planning survey identified the following in the top 10 most impactful LSTA-supported services:
  - o +50% of respondents: book collections and summer library programs.
  - o 33-49% of respondents: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programming for education, and community programs.
  - o 20-32% of respondents: career/employment/college choice support, outreach to hospitals and other institutions, reading improvement, and support for education including home schooling.
  - o Other topics identified in focus groups include: health and wellness resources, community activities, non-traditional library collections, veterans' services, services for refugees and immigrants, services for the aged, ESL and GED programs, and multicultural and multilingual programming.

Planning focus groups included discussions of the reasons many Alabama residents do not use public libraries. Reasons cited include the need for increased programming for some underserved communities (immigrants and migrants, bilingual patrons, veterans), the need for relevant collections and resources, and outreach to those having difficulties using libraries.

Stakeholder input gathered in the previous plan identified the following as "what APLS can do to assist Alabama libraries": support local programming for children, youth, disabled, poor, and underprivileged; support for programming addressing literacy, diversity, children, and youth; and assistance building local partnerships.

Goal 2 Description and Discussion

The following are the titles of the projects and the total amount of LSTA FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 funding that was expended on activities undertaken in support of Goal 2.

Goal 2 Projects & Expenditures: LIFELONG LEARNING

PROJECT TITLE/ Activities	THREE YEAR (FFY 2018, FFY 2019, FFY 2020) EXPENDITURE TOTAL
Resource Sharing and Access (2018, 2019, 2020)	$ 2,417,040.00
Blind and Physically Handicapped (2018, 2019, 2020)	$ 1,496,336.00
Collection Development (2018, 2019, 2020)	$ 965,878.00
Online Tutoring (2018, 2019, 2020)	$ 759,000.00
STEM (2018, 2019, 2020)	$ 203,246.00
Youth and Family (2018, 2019, 2020)	$ 201,935.00
Summer Library Program (2018, 2019, 2020)	$ 74,400.00
Literacy (2018)	$ 65,500.00
Local History (2019)	$ 11,371.00
Workforce Development (2018)	$ 7,000.00
GOAL SUBTOTAL	**$ 6,201,706**

Goal 2 expenditures represent 80 percent of Alabama's total LSTA allotment for the FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 period. Three projects are in double digits - **Resource Sharing and Access** (31.17 percent), **Blind and Physically Handicapped** (19.3 percent), and **Collection Development (**12.46 percent) of the total LSTA allotment. And, **Online Tutoring** is almost ten percent (9.79 percent).

The mission of the state library is to provide access to information for all the residents in Alabama. The **Resource Sharing and Access** project made library materials and information available to all Alabama residents through statewide Interlibrary Loan (ILL), cataloging services, and access to statewide databases (such as Learning Express Library, Ancestry Library Edition, and Chilton Library). This project is the single most expensive project, accounting for more than a third of the LSTA allotment on Goal 2 (31.17 percent). Access to statewide resources, both physical and online resources are vital to the state's public libraries, most of which are located in low-income, rural areas of the state. The libraries do not have the funds to acquire these essential sources on their own and rely on the state to provide them for their daily use. Having statewide access to resources (particularly for routine library tasks such as cataloging and ILL) enables libraries to properly classify their own collections and have access to materials in other libraries when needed.

Despite a fairly small physical collection of materials at APLS, these state-held items are loaned to public libraries on a fairly regular basis and are also available for checkout to state employees (current and retired) and military personnel. Access is also provided to a statewide online catalog, which libraries use to search for materials for their patrons and for assistance with their own cataloging needs. APLS also consults with leaders outside its organization when acquiring materials; this gives others a sense of ownership over the library system. Other agency employees regularly use state library meeting rooms and peruse the collection while in attendance. A short introduction to the state library services is given at quarterly new employee trainings held at State Personnel.

Online resources are also provided. Learning Express is a database of practice tests and resources that helps people of all ages improve their skills in many areas, including math, reading, science, logic, writing, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. Ancestry Library Edition is a genealogical database that helps people discover their family histories. Chilton Library is a DIY vehicle repair database that includes repair, maintenance, and service information about popular cars, trucks, vans, and SUVs.

In FFY 2020, and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the reference staff created LibGuides, offering guidance on sanitizing collections, re-opening issues, and other pandemic-related concerns. With the onset of COVID-19, the enhanced access to electronic resources would probably be the most successful and impactful project. Expanded hours for HomeworkAlabama and remote access to Ancestry Library Edition (ALE) were implemented to help offset patrons' being cut off from using their public library. The use of ALE increased particularly sharply, reaching nearly half a million (483,894) uses in 2021.

Alabama Project Stats	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Resource Sharing and Access			
# OCLC ILL requests	13,420	13,420	5,720
# books added to State Lib collection	595	1,182	2,200
# Learning Express Library sessions	10,295	7,536	4,987
# new registrations	1,768	1,355	732
# tests completed	1,367	5,905	2,768
# tutorials completed	1,049	402	363
# computer classes completed	70	355	188
# Ebooks accessed	1,447	1,212	887
# Ancestry Library Edition usage	430,545	384,484	402,242

APLS expended nearly twenty percent (19.30 percent) of its LSTA Grants to States allotment for FFY 2018 - FFY 2020 on its **Blind and Physically Handicapped** project. These funds provide the primary source of support for the Alabama Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (BPH). This is Alabama's implementation of the Library of Congress (LOC) National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) program.

The Regional Library for the Blind, located at the Alabama Public Library Service's offices in Montgomery, coordinates the program on a statewide basis and provides primary service to 64 of the state's 67 counties. A sub-regional library located at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) in Talladega directly serves the residents of Calhoun, St. Clair, and Talladega Counties. The Alabama Regional Library, like many others in the United States, is in the final stages of transitioning from maintaining a large physical collection of cartridge-based materials to meeting most patron needs through either duplication on demand (DOD) flash media cartridges and/or the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) service. The Regional Library still maintains a small collection of physical Braille materials and contracts with the Utah State Library to address the needs of some other users of physical Braille.

The evaluators had ample opportunity to interact with a wide variety of individuals involved with Alabama's Library for the Blind program in their efforts to assess its impact. This interaction included contact with end users/consumers, representatives of state-level advocacy and support organizations serving a broad range of needs of individuals with visual and other disabilities that impede the use of traditional print resources, Regional Library staff, and the Regional Librarian, Angela Fisher Hall. Thirteen end users participated in a focus group and six of the individuals either interviewed or participated in one of the two virtual focus groups that were held were members of the BPH Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC). Two of the participating CAC members were end users and the remainder represented advocacy organizations. In addition, the evaluators benefited from the fact that BPH administered its biennial patron survey in November and December 2021. A total of 553 completed surveys were received in response to approximately 6,000 that were distributed. This survey also offered insights into the challenges presented in providing talking book services, particularly to rural populations that often lack adequate broadband access.

The profile that emerged through these contacts was one that revealed a highly personalized level of service. The names of the Regional Librarian and other BPH staff members were frequently mentioned in a positive light. One consumer said that the readers' advisors "become like family" and added that this social interaction was even more critical than normal during the pandemic.

The impact of the service itself on individuals was also evident. One consumer said, *"If I was looking for one word to describe the impact of this service, I would say INDEPENDENCE."* Another said, *"I would be impoverished without this service."* The only real concerns expressed were raised by CAC members who spoke of the importance of continuing cartridge-based duplication on demand services citing both the lack of broadband access and the affordability of broadband service needed to fully take advantage of the BARD program.

Statistical data on usership and circulation reveals a slightly lower penetration into the population (users of all types as a percentage of the total population) than in some other states.

At the same time, the statistics reveal a surge in the use of cartridges during the pandemic period, which also corresponds to the transition to placing multiple titles on cartridges using DOD. Staff and the director also reported an increase in patrons trying the BARD program during the pandemic - often with the assistance of family members - because the BARD program was not subject to the kind of disruptions and closures that confronted staff working with physical formats.

Collection Development grants account for 12.46 percent of the LSTA allotment. In 2018, collection development grants were issued to 54 libraries in 28 counties.[10] The populations served by these libraries range from 350 to 659,500 residents. In 2019, collection development grants were issued to 42 libraries in 22 counties.[11] The populations served by these libraries range from 350 to 104,750 residents. In 2020, collection development grants were issued to 52 libraries in 25 counties.[12] The populations served by these libraries range from 350 to 105,880 residents. The grants provide funds to the libraries to update their collections for adults and youth based on collection inventory data and patron requests. Having access to the LSTA funds is especially helpful when communicating with local officials, who can understand that with a relatively small contribution on their part, the libraries have access to other sources of income. Local officials see the increase in library usage as a positive sign of a growing community, and residents reinforce this belief by becoming more educated and subsequently more informed about civic issues. For these libraries, LSTA and matching funds are essential for providing the best service possible. Services were enhanced for existing patrons, and new patrons were encouraged to sign up and become regular library users. Updating collections was especially useful, as many of the beneficiary libraries are located in rural, low-income areas where the community relies on access to free resources. Updating the youth collections had the additional benefit of enhancing the Summer Library Program and creating more interest in -- and more usage of -- the libraries' resources, as well as an increase in the number of young patrons. New users were also added to the library's patron database due to the new books (print and downloadables) and A/V materials. Testimonials speak to the importance of LSTA funds for maintaining the quality of the services. *"Our library has been able to expand and grow our young library through the assistance of LSTA funding, benefiting both the community and library patrons as well as investing in the library as a long- term resource!" "Our small libraries could not survive without it. Funds for materials, computers, programming are all dependent on our LSTA grants each year."*

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[10] Autauga, Baldwin, Barbour, Calhoun, Chilton, Clarke, Cleburne, Colbert, Escambia, Etowah, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Marion, Marshall, Montgomery, Morgan, Pickens, Shelby, St. Clair, Talladega, Tallapoosa, Walker, and Winston

[11] Barbour, Calhoun, Coffee, Colbert, Dale, Dallas, Etowah, Franklin, Houston, Jefferson, Lamar, Lawrence, Limestone, Marion, Marshall, Morgan, Pickens, Shelby, St. Clair, Talladega, Walker, and Winston

[12] Autauga, Baldwin, Bibb, Calhoun, Chambers, Coffee, DeKalb, Escambia, Etowah, Franklin, Hale, Houston, Jefferson, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Lee, Marion, Marshall, Morgan, Pickens, Shelby, St. Clair, Walker, and Winston

Alabama Project Stats	2018	2019	2020
Collection Development			
# lib receiving grants	54	42	52
# books added	17,923	14,376	17,739
# AV materials added	455	601	633
# E-materials added	500,614	792	4,985

Online Tutoring (9.79 percent) provided an online statewide homework help program geared toward students in early elementary through undergraduate levels, as well as adult education. The tutoring program is designed to support both homeschool and classroom instruction, and sessions are active from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. in order to assist students when they are working on their homework. Helping students keep up with their schoolwork by offering them additional instruction time with a qualified tutor greatly enhances their ability to earn good grades, eventually graduate from high school, and potentially explore scholarships to college. Subjects covered include English, math, science, and social studies. There is also a SkillsCenter Resource Library available 24/7 with three main parts: Study Resources, Test Prep Resources, and Career Resources. The SkillsCenter is critically important, as students cannot access their school libraries when schools are closed. Tutor.com even includes test prep resources for the Alabama High School Graduation Exam. Math help was the most requested service for both one-on-one tutoring and SkillsCenter usage.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in Spring 2020, APLS was contacted by Tutor.com about expanding service hours to start at 8:00 a.m. rather than 10:00 a.m. at no additional cost. This was done in response to the shutdown of the state's schools and students doing their school work from home. As a result, there was a noticeable increase in HomeworkAlabama usage. The regular hours of 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. resumed in June 2020 and continued through FFY 2020. Math help continued to be the most requested service.

The incorporation of technology of learning resonates with youth, especially since they are growing up in a technologically oriented world. This project raised student knowledge levels of STEM subjects and inspired interest in STEM careers. Opportunities to explore a variety of different types of activities and interests are limited to many patrons due to economic, educational, and physical parameters. The libraries are helping fill this need by providing a place for youth and adults alike to learn and create.

STEM grants (2.62 percent) were issued to five public libraries in the following counties in 2018: Etowah, Jefferson, Lauderdale, Madison, and Morgan. The populations served by these libraries range from 1,200 to 366,520 residents. In 2019, STEM grants were issued to five public libraries in the following counties: Hale, Lauderdale, Montgomery, and Talladega. The populations served by these libraries range from 1,200 to 366,500 residents. In 2020, another grant was issued to Talladega; the population served was approximately 209,000. The STEM

project helped demonstrate the relevance that libraries still hold in communities; the offering of such programs allows patrons to try something new without a large financial burden on the library itself. While the COVID-19 pandemic did affect the number of programs held, the libraries had the resources in place to pick up their programming sessions at a later time. Libraries had already started making the necessary adjustments to keep the participants safe (i.e., limiting the number of participants, providing sanitizer and masks, etc.).

Alabama Project Stats	2018	2019	2020
Online Tutoring			
# consultation sessions	14,506	23,295	19,691
STEM			
# STEM equipment acquired	225	162	109
# STEM programs	174	56	NA
# STEM participants	10,353	180	NA

Youth and Family (2.6 percent) grants were issued to three public libraries in the following counties in 2018: Dallas, Jackson, and Washington. The populations served by these libraries range from 16,375 to 38,300 residents. In 2019, Youth and Family grants were issued to three public libraries in the following counties: Baldwin, Jackson, and Washington. The populations served by these libraries range from 16,375 to 26,500 residents. In 2020, Youth and Family grants were issued to eight public libraries in the following counties: Coffee, Dallas, Etowah, Jackson, Lauderdale, Limestone, Shelby, and Washington. The populations served by these libraries range from 9,776 to 98,915. These grants provided funds for the libraries to expand their programming opportunities for youth and their families. Youth and Family programs vary in scope, due to the different needs in different communities. Students in rural Washington County have little access to in-person tutoring or ACT prep instruction. Outside of the digital resources offered through the Washington County Public Library (WCPL), students must rely on outdated workbooks in their school libraries. Now that WCPL has implemented its ACT prep classes, students now have access to no-cost personalized assistance. The Scottsboro Public Library consistently tried new outreach programs and made many good contacts in their community for future partnerships. As the library director frequently states, "If you don't ask, you don't get." The library in Selma, in the state's Black Belt area, routinely offered special outreach programs for the youth in the area. They realize that teens are an especially difficult patron base to attract, but still made the effort to offer programming. The library in Daphne is the hub of the community. Baldwin County has a large retirement population, and its libraries are careful to tailor their programming to this group as well as the general population. Through these programs, the libraries have shown attentiveness to what their users want and have tried to provide the services requested. Even though the attendance at some of the programs may

have fallen short of goals, it has been important for these communities to try new ideas and then tinker with them to make them more successful. As word spreads about the library programming, there could be an uptick in usage.

Literacy (<1 percent) grants were issued to four public libraries in the following counties: Coffee, DeKalb, and Lee. The populations served by these libraries range from 1,960 to 65,700 residents. The grants provided funds for the libraries to expand their literacy and reading program learning opportunities for their communities. All of this program's allotment was received in FY18. This program covers a wide variety of activities, all of which helped libraries respond to real needs in their individual communities. The Collinsville Public Library is now in a position to better serve their Hispanic population thanks to the assistance of a bilingual library staff member who can translate to make information easier to understand by both patrons and staff. The Enterprise Public Library forged a partnership with their local housing authority to host a successful literacy event for the entire community. The Lewis Cooper Jr. Memorial Library in Opelika worked with local government officials and medical agencies to provide health literacy information and programming. The Auburn Public Library was able to expand on their "Third Grade Reading Dragons" reading program, giving them the opportunity to work closely with Auburn City Schools. Some Enterprise Housing Authority (EHA) residents expressed that tight budgets do not leave room to purchase books. As a result of the partnership between the Enterprise Public Library and the EHA, many residents are now visiting the library on a regular basis. This is a powerful testament to the importance of the library's central role in their community. In the case of the Enterprise Public Library and the Lewis Cooper Jr. Memorial Library, new partnerships were formed that will lead to future mutually beneficial endeavors.

Alabama Project Stats	2018	2019	2020
Youth and Family			
# youth/teen books added	450	1,116	554
# youth/teen programs	12	70	26
# youth/teen participants	118	3,390	521
# of libraries purchasing youth/teen books	1	2	1
Literacy			
# Literacy materials acquired	1,092	NA	NA
# Literacy programs	322	NA	NA
# Literacy participants	7,276	NA	NA

The statewide **Summer Library Program (<1 percent)** encouraged children to read and maintain their reading skills during the summer months. The intent of this program is to assist public libraries with their individual summer library programs by providing summer library program (SLP) materials and manuals for their use. Having free SLP materials and manuals provided to public libraries enables them to plan and implement programs throughout the summer (and sometimes all year long) because the themes are already set up for them. The collaborative SLP initiative also allows libraries to decide how to proceed with programming. Testimonials for this program are heartwarming and often have far reaching effects into the lives of parents and grandparents as the following testimonial captures:

> *"My grandchildren greatly enjoy the summer reading programs that our library had. My understanding is that some of the funding goes toward these programs which is very beneficial, I feel, to our community. It helps keep our kids engaged through educational entertainment while also introducing them to their local library and its services. Also, me and my husband have definitely taken advantage of our local library and their books and movies. We can no longer afford to have cable television and have had to reduce some of our entertainment costs. Having a place where we can freely access books and movies is a great savings to us. We love our local library. I have also attended several craft events and it allows me to get to know other people in my community. One last thing I can comment on is the use of their public computers. Both my husband and myself have had the need to use their computers for various things. I have even tried my [hand] at the ancestry site. Thank you so much for helping with their funding. It means a lot to our community!"*

Studies show that students who take part in their local library's summer library program significantly improve their reading skills, which helps them as they return to school. Many of the students who participate in the SLPs enter the next school year at a higher reading level thanks to reading throughout the summer. Grants were issued to the Hobson City Public Library (Calhoun County), Millport Public Library (Lamar County), and Rainsville Public Library (DeKalb County) to provide funds for library materials and programs for their SLPs in 2018 and similarly to Mary Wallace Cobb Memorial Library (Lamar County) and Rainsville Public Library (DeKalb County) in 2019. Libraries indicated that the SLP has benefited the youth in their communities based on school reading scores and Accelerated Reader (AR) rankings. The libraries' SLP offerings were affected by COVID-19, but they still found a way to operate; patrons still had access to library services in this time of isolation, even if they were delivered in nontraditional ways.

Alabama Project Stats	2018	2019	2020
Summer Library Program			
# books added to lib collections	458	212	225

Alabama Project Stats	2018	2019	2020
# in person programs	137	825	NA
# in person participants	3,716	5,792	NA
# libraries offering in-person programs	NA	NA	87
# virtual programs	13,000	2,765	5,405
# virtual program attendance	350,000	232,525	238,933

Local History (<1 percent) grants were issued to the Fairhope Public Library (Baldwin County) and the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library in 2019. The libraries are literally located at the opposite ends of the state: Madison County borders Tennessee and Baldwin County borders Florida. The population served by the Fairhope library is approximately 22,085 while the Huntsville library serves approximately 366,500. Funds were used to host local history programs (Fairhope) and to implement the "Huntsville in Retrospect" program by purchasing appropriate equipment and materials. The City of Fairhope has a rich, unique history. The library began creating a digital archive of local historical documents and photographs, including the Fairhope Single Tax Colony, and made them available online through Alabama Mosaic. In an effort to get a more inclusive picture of the area's history and to involve its community, the library actively collected the perspectives and memories of local individuals of diverse ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds. The Huntsville-Madison County Library did a similar project in their community. It was the libraries' intent to bring communities together and increase involvement in their respective areas. The best source of local history are the citizens (especially those who are lifelong residents). Compiling local history documents and making them available to everyone is a great way to share stories of the community.

A **Workforce Development (<0.1 percent)** grant was issued to the B. B. Comer Memorial Library in Sylacauga (Talladega County) in 2018. The population served by the library is approximately 12,150 residents. Funds were used to implement the "Back to Work" program by purchasing Chromebooks and an updated collection of job skills/workforce development materials. The purpose of this grant was to enable the B. B. Comer Memorial Library to work more closely with job seekers in parts of four surrounding counties who use the library, as well as the workforce development partners who have the resources to support the library's efforts to enhance marketable skills and provide digital instruction. This project helped purchase a mobile training cart with Chromebooks, which allowed the library to provide instruction for job seekers in a group setting. Up-to-date books on topics that help reinforce marketable skills were also added to the library's collection. This type of project is in line with Governor Ivey's Workforce Development Initiative, and showcasing free resources and programs is a powerful way to show that the library deeply cares about the community and their needs. This project also required training for the library staff and volunteers, who provided four to six training sessions on topics geared toward job seekers, such as completing resumes, filling out online job applications, and searching online job banks. Many individuals gained valuable skills from

these sessions, ranging from learning how to send an email and creating a Google Doc to being able to fill out an online job application and create a resume.

Goal 2 Conclusion - Retrospective Question A-1

A-1. To what extent did APLS' Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards Goal 2?

Goal 2 covers a wide range of activities and the plan had some very ambitious specific targets regarding this goal such as increasing the program offerings by two (2) percent every year. Furthermore, the plan has specific mentions regarding the implementation of a baseline survey to monitor satisfaction levels and achieve specific levels of satisfaction. The goals specifically set growth targets which of course given the COVID-19 reality it was not possible to achieve. There was no regular annual survey implemented though evaluation data on program offerings have happened based on specific IMLS questions for different programs. Providing expanded access to resources like HomeworkAlabama and Ancestry Library Edition helped libraries establish themselves as key contributors to recovery during a pandemic. Trends like the posting of useful resources around COVID-19 on public library websites is another way the public libraries in Alabama proved their value to their communities in the last two years of the pandemic.   The evaluators conclude that Alabama Public Library Service has PARTLY ACHIEVED Goal 2.

Goal 3 Retrospective Assessment: INFORMATION ACCESS

GOAL 3: Provide information access to all populations through the provision of statewide access to electronic resources and cooperative services, enabling technology, and increased public awareness and use of libraries for information access, knowledge, ideas and cultural heritage.

Goal 3 meets the following needs identified in the plan:
•   Stakeholder input gathered during the 2018-2022 planning focus groups indicated the importance of the availability of computers and Internet access for fulfillment of information needs. Participants consistently ranked these in the top five services in terms of impact. In many communities, public library computers and Internet connections fill a critical gap in access to information for residents.
•   The focus groups included discussions of the reasons many do not use public libraries. Reasons cited include misconceptions or lack of awareness of library services and programs, challenges in reaching specific communities, and inadequate technology environments.

Goal 3 Description and Discussion

Following are the titles of the projects and the total amount of LSTA FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 funding that was expended on activities undertaken in support of Goal 3.

Goal 3 Projects & Expenditures: INFORMATION ACCESS

PROJECT TITLE/ Activities	THREE YEAR (FFY 2018, FFY 2019, FFY 2020) EXPENDITURE TOTAL
Technology Upgrade (2018, 2019, 2020)	$ 805,364
IT Support Services (2018, 2019, 2020)	$ 112,667
Document Delivery and Access (2019)	$ 50,831
Statistics Program (2018, 2019, 2020)	$ 38,325
GOAL SUBTOTAL	**$ 1,007,187**

Goal 3 expenditures represent almost 13 percent (12.99 percent) of Alabama's total LSTA allotment for the FFY 2018 – FFY 2020 period. Four projects account for all the expenses with **Technology Upgrade** being the only project in the double digits (10.39 percent) of the total allotment.

Technology Upgrade grants account for 10.39 percent of the LSTA allotment. In 2018, technology upgrade grants were issued to 18 public libraries and one special library (AIDB Resource Center) in 15 counties.[13] The populations served by these libraries range from 1,045 to 659,300 residents. In 2019, technology upgrade grants were issued to 27 public libraries in 19 counties.[14] The populations served by these libraries range from 760 to 659,300 residents. In 2020, grants were issued to 23 public libraries and one special library (AIDB Resource Center) in 19 counties.[15] The populations served by these libraries range from 425 to 225,765 residents. The needs for technology in the rural areas is captured with this testimonial *"[Name of Library] is located in rural northwest Al. High speed internet is not available to most of our patrons and if it were, some would not be able to pay for it. Thanks to an LSTA grant we were able to purchase computers for the community to use."*

Technology programs are vitally important to the communities they serve. For many patrons, the public library is their go-to place for technology access, education, and recreation. Having upgraded equipment available for the public (as well as making circulation tasks easier) benefits both the public and the library staff. These libraries have seen increased traffic in their facilities. Although RFID implementation can be a daunting task for staff and patrons alike, the end result makes the effort worthwhile. A large upfront financial investment can be recovered through lower collection replacement costs. The addition of high-speed, reliable computers

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[13] Baldwin, Blount, Calhoun, Cullman, Dale, Escambia, Geneva, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mobile, Montgomery, Morgan, Perry, Shelby, and Talladega

[14] Autauga, Baldwin, Calhoun, Chilton, Clarke, Colbert, DeKalb, Geneva, Houston, Jefferson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Macon, Marion, Pike, Shelby, St. Clair, Talladega, and Tuscaloosa

[15] Baldwin, Calhoun, Chilton, Choctaw, Clarke, Dale, DeKalb, Elmore, Escambia, Franklin, Geneva, Jefferson, Lamar, Lowndes, Montgomery, Shelby, St. Clair, Talladega, and Tallapoosa

drastically reduced downtime and helped alleviate or eliminate the wait times for patrons to use the computers. The libraries are providing this essential access to their communities as residents are looking for employment; this situation has become even more urgent in the post--COVID-19 era, due to the number of job losses faced by Alabamians. The self-check stations have provided greater independence and encouraged more library use by patrons. Upgraded security measures decreased theft of library materials. Some of these libraries have heavy meeting room usage, and the addition of upgraded presentation equipment has helped them provide needed meeting space for their communities.

IT Support Services (1.45 percent) expanded the ability of librarians all over the state, most of whom are located in low-income, rural areas, to provide better technology services for their patrons. Many of these locations have been affected by the closure of local factories and businesses,[16] which has cut off critical local funding revenues. As the residents in these areas look for employment and recreation opportunities, they rely on the libraries to provide access to updated technology and Internet access. Having the most up-to-date technology and access is critical in Alabama's low-income areas. The APLS IT Division is composed of seven full-time professional technicians with certification and knowledge in various areas of technology. Due to a lack of local funding for IT services, many libraries rely on the state's IT technicians for help with troubleshooting, purchasing, and installation of equipment. Together, they comprise a strong team of specialized support for public libraries regarding hardware, software, open-source products, WiFi, web development, and other areas. Their main function is to provide no-cost technical support to public libraries so that the libraries do not have to find and pay for individual tech support.

Alabama Project Stats	2018	2019	2020
Technology Upgrade			
computer equipment acquired	299	319	286
RFID equipment purchased	5	NA	NA
scanners acquired	6	NA	4
# libraries equipment installed	19	NA	24
IT Support Services			
Support hours	2000+	2000+	1700+
Trouble tickets opened	1,640	2,096	2,091
Trouble tickets closed	1,387	1,997	2,017
IT hardware acquired	84	NA	NA

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[16] https://www.madeinalabama.com/warn-list/

Document Delivery and Access (0.66 percent) grants were issued to the Horseshoe Bend Regional Library (Coosa, Elmore, Lee, and Tallapoosa Counties), Vestavia Hills Public Library (Jefferson County), and Washington County Public Library in order to provide outreach services to their communities in 2019. The HBRL purchased a new fuel-efficient cargo van. This vehicle is less expensive to operate, which has freed up more funds for materials and programs used by other community agencies, such as senior centers and daycares. The VHPL purchased a RemoteLocker Kiosk, which has helped deliver materials to patrons in a more rural area of the county. The WCPL used the funds to refurbish their existing service vehicle, although due to COVID-19, they had to delay their plans to put the vehicle out on the road until 2021. The populations served by these libraries range from 16,375 to 297,040 residents. Due to rural locations in many counties, there are large underserved populations in the state, and funding for additional library facilities is not feasible at this time. This makes outreach services in this program critically important, as they provide materials and WiFi access to these remote areas.

The **Statistics Program** (0.49 percent) provided statistical information about Alabama public libraries to public library trustees, administrators, and the general public. The compilation of annual statistical data is the best way to determine how users patronize libraries, and libraries cannot receive state aid without providing this information to APLS. Bibliostat is the database used by the libraries to input and submit their reports. The statistical reports are passed on to IMLS and the U.S. Census Bureau for review and dissemination. This information is used by *Library Journal* for their annual "Star Libraries" issue. Alabama public libraries have been featured in the "Star Libraries" issue since the series began in 2009. The data analysis APLS provides is insightful and comprehensive.

Goal 3 Conclusion - Retrospective Question A-1

A-1. To what extent did APLS' Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards Goal 3?

Goal 3 had specific measurable targets set in the pre-COVID era that assumed a growth economy for libraries. Targets included three (3) percent annual growth of statewide resources and seven (7) percent annual growth of user satisfaction. It assumed implementation of baseline surveys and annual follow up on connectivity. Lastly, it set a five (5) percent growth benchmark for awareness of library services. Again, COVID-19 impeded APLS' ability to implement and monitor the baseline survey and monitoring tools for these targets. Furthermore, the closings of libraries and the reduction in the usage of physical spaces has been negatively affecting awareness and satisfaction. Despite this, and more than ever before, the need for civic spaces like libraries to be ready to emerge into the post-pandemic world is critical. On the plus side, broadband in households is gradually increasing patrons' ability to access online resources. The evaluators believe that the Alabama Public Library Service has PARTLY ACHIEVED Goal 3.

Retrospective Assessment Questions A-2 and A-3

Retrospective Question A-2

A-2. To what extent did APLS' Five-Year Plan activities achieve results that address national priorities associated with the Measuring Success focal areas and their corresponding intents?

APLS' Five-Year Plan clearly focuses heavily on the top three focal areas (Lifelong Learning, Information Access, and Institutional Capacity). Appendix F provides a detailed view of how the APLS projects map to LSTA focal areas and intents on a project-by-project basis. The results achieved are in line with the national priorities associated with the Measuring Success framework and their corresponding intents.

Retrospective Question A-3

A-3. Did any of the following groups represent a substantial focus for APLS' Five-Year Plan activities? (Yes/No)

GROUP	YES
Library workforce (current and future)	YES
Individuals living below the poverty line	YES
Individuals that are unemployed/underemployed	YES
Ethnic or minority populations	YES
Immigrants/refugees	NO
Individuals with disabilities	YES
Individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills	YES
Families	YES
Children (aged 0-5)	YES
School-aged youth (aged 6-17)	YES

Process Questions B-1, B-2, and B-3

Process Question B-1

B-1. How has APLS used any data from the State Program Report (SPR) and elsewhere (e.g., Public Libraries Survey) to guide activities included in the Five-Year Plan?

APLS saw that with the physical location services closing, the need for electronic resources that would meet the needs of school kids such as tutoring and access to the online edition of Ancestry were important for younger and older age cohorts respectively. APLS used the knowledge they have regarding the use of electronic resources to ensure that critical services were available to the residents of Alabama.

Process Question B-2

B-2. Specify any modifications APLS made to the Five-Year Plan. What was the reason for this change? There were no modifications made to the APLS plan.

Process Question B-3

B-3. How and with whom has APLS shared data from the SPR and from other evaluation resources? How has APLS used the last Five-Year Evaluation to inform data collected for the new Five-Year Evaluation? How has APLS used this information throughout this five-year cycle?

APLS shared data with the LSTA Advisory Council, APLS Executive Board, and Library Development staff. APLS' understanding of the needs of the residents of Alabama based on the town halls held in the previous evaluation resulted in being ready to meet needs with the current plan and also through the adjustments made due to COVID-19.

Methodology Questions C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-4

Methodology Question C-1

C-1. Identify how APLS implemented an independent Five-Year Evaluation using the criteria described in the section of this guidance document called Selection of an Independent Evaluator.

APLS issued a competitive RFP for the selection of an Independent Evaluator and selected QualityMetrics because of the extensive experience our consultants, Martha Kyrillidou and Bill Wilson, have with LSTA Evaluation.

Methodology Question C-2

C-2. Describe the types of statistical and qualitative methods (including administrative records) used in conducting the Five-Year Evaluation. Assess their validity and reliability.

QualityMetrics, LLC, deployed a multi-faceted and rigorous mixed methods protocol for data collection. Thorough reviews of demographic data, quantitative Public Libraries Survey (PLS) data, and SPR data formed the basis of our knowledge from the RFP response onward. Our initial interaction created a space for the APLS to deposit additional data and files and reflect on the program. After a series of Zoom calls (first with APLS representatives at the beginning of the evaluation process and secondly, later in the process, to discuss whether goals had been achieved, partially achieved, or not achieved), we stayed in touch with the agency to resolve questions that emerged from the data collection and to solicit additional information. Data gathering included: (a) interviews with agency staff members; (b) interviews with project managers of various SPR-reported projects and activities; (c) focus group discussions with

project teams; (d) focus group discussions with project and activity beneficiaries; and (e) responses to a broad-based short survey for library staff and stakeholders with some knowledge of and engagement with LSTA-funded activities; this survey primarily collected qualitative contextual information about past activities and future needs.

COVID-19 presented special circumstances, and a number of considerations had to be taken into account to complete our research. The pandemic, due to its travel restrictions and social distancing limitations, necessitated many changes in how evaluation work is done and how we engage policymakers and program managers.[17] We replaced face-to-face interviews with remote interviews and desk-based methods, paying attention to (a) maximizing use of technology; (b) securing engagement while reaching out to the most marginalized populations (small and rural libraries, and, in particular, users of talking books services); and (c) enhancing triangulation to validate remote data.[18] In some ways, these approaches allowed flexibility and the intersectionality of our Zoom meetings was an interesting outcome as smaller would attend large/medium library gatherings if convenient and vice versa.

While no on-site visit to the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) was conducted during this evaluation period, the use of Google Maps allowed us to visit the location virtually. Virtual (Zoom) one-on-one interviews were held with the agency director and with key staff engaged in LSTA work and in specific projects carried out under the LSTA Five-Year Plan. The Five-Year Evaluation is a summative assessment, and as such, the availability of the SPR data was of critical importance.

Furthermore, the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 have strengthened the state library agency role. During this time of crisis, the state library was the source of answers for its communities and for the profession as a whole. APLS responded to this need by holding statewide community meetings via Webex (the state approved platform), elevating the importance of the LSTA activities even while they were being disrupted by the pandemic. Creative solutions were identified in most instances, as many programs had to turn to virtual delivery for most of the pandemic period. In some ways,

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[17] OECD/DAC and IEO/UNDP (2020) Guidance Note: Good practices during COVID-19; UNICEF Evaluation Office (2020) Technical Note: Response of the UNICEF Evaluation Function to the COVID-19 Crisis; WFP Office of Evaluation (2020) Technical Note for {Planning and Conducting Evaluations During COVID-19; UNFPA Evaluation Office (2020) Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic; UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (2020) Event planning and implementation during COVID-19; ILO Evaluation Office (2020) Implications of COVID-19 on evaluations in the ILO; FAO Office of Evaluations (2020) Risk analysis and guidance for the management and conduct of evaluations during international and national level COVID-190 crisis and restrictions.

[18] UNFPA Evaluation Office (2020) Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic.

the impact of recording virtual programming is more evident and more readily documented. However, we do run the risk of minimizing the adverse effects of virtual programming on marginalized communities, which were often more difficult to reach during the COVID-19 crisis. There are still libraries in Alabama that had connectivity issues that prevented them from joining virtual meetings with ease.

The toll on the mental health of the communities has also been evident during the pandemic, as its restrictions have established new norms for in-person interaction. Student learning and well-being have been precarious due to the disruption of the education life cycle.[19] However, opportunities to help students catch up with unfinished learning were realized in Alabama with the online tutoring platform in place. Ancestry Library Edition (ALE) was also made remotely accessible by the vendor to all the residents in Alabama, and enhanced usage statistics are a testament to its utility. In contrast, and due to the fact that community behaviors were frequently monitored during the pandemic, respondents feel overly surveyed in many instances and screen fatigue is a real issue.

A web-based survey targeting the library community was conducted between September 14, 2021 to September 17, 2021. This survey provided considerable qualitative information, as well as some additional quantitative information. Additional corroborative evidence from comments collected in the survey served to triangulate the previously gathered evidence.

Programming in a Pandemic

in News

As libraries respond to coronavirus, library workers are faced with difficult questions.

Validity and reliability analysis traditionally reflect a positivist worldview, and in a qualitative naturalistic approach, they are being redefined by some divergent views on whether and how one ensures quality and rigor in qualitative inquiry. The notion that naturalistic inquiry needs to exhibit quality, rigor, and trustworthiness has gained more traction nowadays. The quality and rigor of the phone interviews conducted by the evaluators in the LSTA evaluation of APLS has been enhanced by references to external website links, Google Maps, and internal triangulation. In some instances, interviewees have been asked to allow recording of the conversation (with assurances of confidentiality by the evaluators). At other times, two evaluators have attended focus groups or shared note-taking in real time through shared access to Google Documents and Google Drive. This approach has allowed evaluators to refine their inquiry and tailor it as knowledge of APLS was refined from one interaction to the next. Recorded conversations also allowed the evaluators to reflect upon and modify their interpretations in a reliable manner. The validity of

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[19] The impact of the pandemic on K-12 learning loss has been documented approximately leaving students with five month of learning loss in math and four months of learning loss in reading; the effects are larger for historically disadvantaged students. See Sarah Mervosh, "The pandemic hurt these students the most." In print "Pandemic widened U.S. Educational Gap into a Gulf, Research Suggests." *New York Times,* July 28, 2021, Section A, Page 13.

the inquiry was strengthened with the informed selection of the subjects we interviewed by APLS' leadership team and staff.

Methodology Question C-3

C-3. Describe the stakeholders involved in the various stages of the Five-Year Evaluation. How did QualityMetrics in cooperation with APLS engage them?

Numerous small-group virtual sessions and telephone interviews were conducted with librarians and other persons with knowledge of LSTA-funded initiatives in Alabama. Often times, these interactions were enhanced by virtual tours of their library buildings and physical facilities through Google Maps. One-on-one interviews were also conducted with consumers of the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled program.

The focus groups and interviews provided both qualitative evidence and context that supplemented a review of agency-supplied statistical data and information and data submitted in the form of the State Program Reports (SPRs).

Interviewees shared their knowledge of LSTA utilization, enhancing interactions and depth and quality of the conversations. Furthermore, principal investigators Martha Kyrillidou and Bill Wilson conducted both separate and joint interviews and group sessions and shared and discussed their observations in order to develop a shared understanding of the meaning of the library experience in Alabama and how it was supported by APLS with LSTA support. Both investigators participated in many of the agency interviews, allowing for the concept of triangulation to be implemented as evaluators debriefed and compared interpretations and understandings.

Methodology Question C-4

C-4. Discuss how APLS will share the key findings and recommendations with others.

APLS will share key findings with the LSTA Advisory Council, APLS Executive Board, and Library Development staff. All of these bodies were kept apprised and engaged during the LSTA evaluation process. The Advisory Council evaluates and scores competitive grant applications, the Executive Board approves grant applications, and the Library Development staff use the information to better assist the public libraries in their district. A summary of the findings will be included in an issue of *APLSeeds*, the bi-weekly newsletter and will be posted on the APLS website. The LSTA Coordinator is experienced and knowledgeable in ensuring the appropriate information reaches people and tracks specific performance targets on a regular basis.

This evaluation would be remiss if it did not acknowledge the increased funding that the state agencies have received through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) and the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA). APLS successfully disbursed these one-time additional sources of funding. A big thank you to all parties involved for helping our communities and libraries thrive during the unprecedented times of COVID-19.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Acronyms

AIDB - Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind

ALA - American Library Association

ALE – Ancestry Library Edition

APLS - Alabama Public Library Service

AR - Accelerated Reader

ARPA - American Recovery Plan Act

BARD - Braille and Audio Reading Download

BPH - Blind and Physically Handicapped

CAC - Consumer Advisory Committee

CARES - Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act

CIPA - Children's Internet Protection Act

DIY – Do-It-Yourself

DOD - Duplication on Demand

EHA - Enterprise Housing Authority

E-Rate - the Universal Service Schools and Libraries Program

ESL - English as a Second Language

GED - Tests of General Educational Development

HBRL – Horseshoe Bend Regional Library

IMLS - Institute of Museum and Library Services

ILL - Interlibrary Loan

IT - Information Technology

LOC - Library of Congress

LSTA - Library Services and Technology Act

NLS - National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled

OCLC - Online Computer Library Center

PLS – Public Libraries Survey

RFP - Request for Proposal

SLAA - State Library Administrative Agency

SLP - Summer Library Program

SPR - State Program Report

STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics

STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

VHPL - Vestavia Hills Public Library

WCPL - Washington County Public Library

Appendix B: Interviewees/ Focus Groups

One on One	Stakeholder	Title, Institution	Date
#1	Kelyn Ralya	LSTA Coordinator, APLS	6/4/2021
#2	Jennifer Holman	Finance Officer, APLS	6/4/2021
#3	Nancy Pack	State Librarian, APLS	7/16/2021
#4	Tracey Thomas	B. B. Comer Memorial Library, Sylacauga	9/20/2021
#5	Jaunita Owes	Montgomery City-County Public Library (MCCPL) Retired Director	9/24/2021
#6	Angela Fisher Hall	Regional Librarian - Alabama Regional Library for the Blind, APLS	9/24/2021
#7	Zella'Ques Holmes	MCCPL Interim Library Director	10/4/2021
#8	Rhonda Napier	Library Development Manager, APLS	10/7/2021
#9	Jessica Everingham	Assistant Director, APLS	10/7/2021

Focus Group	Stakeholders	Number of Participants	Date
#1	Public Library Directors (introductory meeting)	60	9/23/2021
#2	Library Development Group	10	9/24/2021
#3	Staff - LBPH	8	10/7/2021
#4	LSTA Training by Kelyn (observation of LSTA virtual training)	50	10/19/2021
#5	LSTA Advisory Council (introduce LSTA)	9	11/15/2021
#6	Virtual Town Hall - Librarians (small)	38	11/15/2021
#7	Virtual Town Hall - Librarians (large)	7	11/16/2021
#8	Virtual Town Hall - Librarians (medium size)	13	11/17/2021

#9	Virtual Town Hall - Trustees	4	11/8/2021
#11	Virtual Town Hall - Trustees	1	11/18/2021
#13	LBPH Advisory Committee	13	1/4/2022
#14	LBPH Advisory Committee	14	1/7/2022
TOTAL		*227*	

Appendix C: Bibliography of Documents Reviewed

State Agency Sources

- [Alabama Public Libraries Map](#)
- [Alabama Public Library Service Annual Reports](#)
- [Alabama Public Library Boards of Trustees Handbook (2019)](#)
- [APLS Newsletter](#)
- APLS Quarterly Reports for Library Development.
- APLS Statistics Summary for FFY 2018, 2019, and 2020.
- BPH Patron Survey 2016; BPH Patron Survey 2019.
- [Code of Alabama Chapter 90 "Free Public Libraries."](#)
- LSTA Applications 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022.
- [New Directors Orientation](#) Presentation Materials, August 4, 2021.

Federal Government Publications

Federal Agency Data Sources

- Institute of Museum and Library Services, [State Program Report (SPR) report](#)
- Institute of Museum and Library Services, [Public Library Statistics](#)
- Institute of Museum and Library Services, [State Profiles](#)
- Institute of Museum and Library Services ["Grants to States" Conference](#)
- Institute of Museum and Library Services, [State Library Administrative Agency Survey](#)
- National Center for Education Statistics, [Academic Libraries](#)
- National Center for Education Statistics, [Schools and Staffing](#)
- United States Census Bureau, [Decennial Census](#) (April 1, 2020)

Evaluation Resources and COVID-19

- OECD/DAC and IEO/UNDP (2020) *Guidance Note: Good practices during COVID-19.*
- UNICEF Evaluation Office (2020) *Technical Note: Response of the UNICEF Evaluation Function to the COVID-19 Crisis.*
- WFP Office of Evaluation (2020) *Technical Note for Planning and Conducting Evaluations During COVID-19.*
- UNFPA Evaluation Office (2020) *Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic.*
- UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (2020) *Event planning and implementation during COVID-19.*
- ILO Evaluation Office (2020) *Implications of COVID-19 on evaluations in the ILO.*

- FAO Office of Evaluations (2020) *Risk analysis and guidance for the management and conduct of evaluations during international and national level COVID-19 crisis and restrictions.*

Other Resources

- Ethel Himmel and William J. Wilson. The Functions and Roles of State Library Agencies. American Library Association, Chicago, 2020.
- The Institute of Museum and Library Services. 2021. Functions and Roles of State Libraries: 2000 and 2020. Washington, DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services.
- Measures that Matter: Workforce Development Literature Review, January 12, 2021.
- Results from the SDC E-Resources Survey (received January 2022).
- Sarah Mervosh, "The pandemic hurt these students the most." In print "Pandemic widened U.S. Educational Gap into a Gulf, Research Suggests." *New York Times*, July 28, 2021, Section A, Page 13.
- The School Librarian Investigation: Decline or Evolution? https://libslide.org/

Appendix D: Focus Group and Interview Questions

Focus groups
General Questions

1. What stands out as being the most effective use of LSTA in Alabama over the last three years?
2. Are there specific examples of projects that you think were the most impactful on the lives of the citizens of Alabama?
3. Are there specific changes in how LSTA funds should be expended in the future? Are there new or emerging needs that are unmet that need to be addressed?

Potential Follow-up Questions

1. What type of programs work for library patrons and staff, in general?
2. What type of programs work for public library patrons, school and academic library clientele, and library staff specifically?
3. What do non-participating libraries and borderline participants need to be able to participate in, grant funded projects or statewide programs?
4. How will the library patrons and library staff be satisfied with the delivery of services?
5. What programs will result in cost savings for participating libraries?

Outcome Questions

1. Will more patrons use the library services because of the grant programs?
2. Will there be an increase in community involvement in relation to the grant programs?
3. Will customer service improve due to staff training from LSTA funded events?
4. Will the statewide programs enhance libraries' abilities to serve patrons?

Interview guidelines

1. Introductions (include that you are working for QualityMetrics, a library consulting firm headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, established in 2016). Ask them to tell you a bit about themselves.
2. Ask their familiarity with LSTA program. If they are unfamiliar, you can provide some or all of the below info -
   a. *The Library Services and Technology Act's (LSTA) "Grants to States" program is the single largest source of ongoing federal funding for libraries. Many states spend funds on a combination of statewide initiatives and on subgrants awarded to individual libraries to enable them to launch innovative efforts or to extend services to populations that are difficult to reach.*

b. *The LSTA program requires that each state conduct an evaluation of its LSTA program every five years. These evaluations are overseen by the Institute of Museum and Library Services but are conducted by independent evaluators. QualityMetrics was selected to conduct the state-level evaluations for nine states in the Northeast and our company is also working with more than a dozen additional states and territories. The results of our review are due to be submitted to IMLS in March of 2022.*

3. FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT WORK FOR THE SLAA (who manage a project):
   a. Ask them to talk about the particular grant/s they worked with. Allow them to lead the conversation in an exploratory fashion. Ask follow up questions.
   b. Identify where there are materials or data from their projects that it would be useful for us to see.

4. FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT WORK FOR THE SLAA (high level stakeholder):
   a. Go through the plan goal by goal, remind them of the goal wording and the percent of funds the state spent on it, get their reflections on progress toward each goal.
   b. Are there any future needs we should be emphasizing in the evaluation?

5. FOR SLAA STAFF on specific projects:
   a. Ask them to talk about the particular programs they are responsible for
   b. Let them know the data available (SPR, output, etc.) and verify that there is no other data or materials they have that would be helpful to us. If they only listed outputs in the SPR outcomes data, ask about plans for outcome data in the future.
   c. What do you see as the needs moving forward for the next seven years?

6. ALL: What impact have you seen LSTA dollars have on your state?

7. ALL: Is there anything you think we should have asked that we didn't?

Appendix E: Web-Survey Instrument

Alabama LSTA Survey 2021

WELCOME

Every five years, each state library administrative agency in the nation is required to conduct an independent evaluation of its implementation of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) "Grants to States" program. This evaluation must be submitted in order to qualify for ongoing Federal funding.

Following close on the heels of the evaluation is the requirement for the submission of a new state-level five-year plan for the LSTA program. QualityMetrics, Library Consultants is assisting the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) with the evaluation.

QualityMetrics has been gathering information and data from a number of different sources including the State Program Report (SPR) that APLS submits annually to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), internal statistical and narrative reports, survey data, and personal interviews with APLS staff as well as with representatives of the library community in the state. We'd like your help in assessing the impact of the LSTA program on your library and on the people that your library serves.

You are invited to share your thoughts and ideas by answering three short questions. The survey should take you no more than ten minutes to complete. The first question asks you to look back over the last few years and to consider how the LSTA program has benefited libraries and library users. Second, we'd like to invite you to think about the future and to suggest new ways in which you think LSTA funds should be invested. Finally, we want to give you an opportunity to offer any other observations about Alabama's LSTA program (positive or negative).   Thank you in advance for helping the Alabama Public Library Service serve your community better!

BACKGROUND

Alabama receives approximately $2.5 million in LSTA Grants to States funding each year. The largest portion of this funding by far (about 80%) has been allocated to support of Lifelong Learning and includes resources sharing, database access, the library for the blind and physically impaired, online tutoring, collection development, STEM as well as literacy, youth and family, summer reading, and workforce development materials.

The second largest portion (15%) supports Information Access with programs such as technology upgrades, IT support services, document delivery and access, and collection and provision of statistics.

The last portion (5%) of the budget supports Professional Development with programs such as consulting services, professional training, and new directors' orientation.

LSTA dollars are used to supplement state and local funds and to foster creativity and innovation in meeting the needs of Alabama's existing and potential library users and citizens. About 70% of LSTA funding is expended for statewide projects and about 30% funds a wide variety of more localized subgrant activities.

1) Think back over the past three years (2018, 2019, and 2020). Which, if any, of the LSTA-supported programs mentioned on the last page have had the greatest impact on your library and on the people your library serves? How is library service in your community better because of the investment of LSTA funds?

LOOKING FORWARD

2) Look ahead to the next five years (2023 - 2027). Are there changes in the way that LSTA dollars are invested that you think would significantly improve library services in Alabama? If so, what are they and why do you think that the change(s) would make a difference. *(Note that LSTA funding cannot be used for building facilities or for lobbying purposes.)*

OTHER COMMENTS

3) Please feel free to offer any additional comments about Alabama's LSTA program. What do you like or dislike about the program? What could be improved? *(Note that your responses are confidential and comments will not be identified with an individual or with a specific library.)*

OPTIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

4) The library that I represent is:

A public library

A school library

An academic library

A special library

Other (Please specify below.)

If you responded "Other" to the question above, please specify the type of library you represent in the text box provided below.

5) My role in the library that I represent is:

Director

Manager or Department Head

Youth Services Librarian

Adult Services Librarian

Technical Services Librarian

Technology Specialist

Library Trustee

Other (Please specify below.)

If you responded "Other" to the question above, please specify your role in the library you represent in the text box provided below.

Thank You!

Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us.

Appendix F: Measuring Success Crosswalk Table

ALABAMA Measuring Success Focal Areas and Intents

	1.1 Consulting Services	1.2 Professional Training	1.3 New Directors Orientation	2.1 Resource Sharing and Access	2.2 Blind and Physically Handicapped	2.3 Collection Development	2.4 Online Tutoring	2.5 STEM	2.6 Youth and Family	2.7 Literacy	2.8 Summer Library Program	2.9 Local History	2.10 Workforce Development	2.11 Supplemental State Aid	3.1 Technology Upgrade	3.2 IT Support Services	3.3 Document Delivery and Access	3.4 Statistics Program
Lifelong Learning							YES	YES	YES	YES	YES							
Improve users' formal education							YES											
Improve users' general knowledge and skills								YES	YES	YES	YES							
Information Access				YES	YES	YES							YES				YES	
Improve users' ability to discover information resources																		
Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources				YES	YES	YES							YES				YES	
Institutional Capacity	YES	YES	YES												YES	YES		YES
Improve the library workforce	YES	YES	YES													YES		
Improve the library's physical and technological infrastructure															YES			
Improve library operations																		YES
Economic & Employment Development													YES					
Improve users' ability to use resources and apply information for employment support													YES					
Improve users' ability to use and apply business resources																		
Human Resources																		
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal, family or household finances																		
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their personal or family health & wellness																		
Improve users' ability to apply information that furthers their parenting and family skills																		
Civic Engagement												YES						
Improve users' ability to participate in their community												YES						
Improve users' ability to participate in community conversations around topics of concern																		

Appendix G: Targeted Audiences Crosswalk Table

ALABAMA
Target Population Served

	Library Workforce (current and future)	Individuals Living Below the Poverty Line	Individuals who are unemployed/underemployed	Ethnic or Minority Populations	Immigrants/Refugees	Individuals with Disabilities	Individuals with Limited Functional Literacy or Information Skills	Families	Children (aged 0-5)	School-aged Youth (aged 6-17)	General (aged 18-64)	Senior (aged 65+)
1.1 Consulting Services	YES											
1.2 Professional Training	YES											
1.3 New Directors Orientation	YES											
2.1 Resource Sharing and Access	YES											
2.2 Blind and Physically Handicapped						YES			YES	YES	YES	YES
2.3 Collection Development		YES	YES									
2.4 Online Tutoring		YES					YES	YES		YES		
2.5 STEM												
2.6 Youth and Family								YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
2.7 Literacy				YES					YES	YES	YES	YES
2.8 Summer Library Program	YES								YES	YES		
2.9 Local History												
2.10 Workforce Development			YES									
3.1 Technology Upgrade												
3.2 IT Support Services	YES											
3.3 Document Delivery and Access												
3.4 Statistics Program	YES											

Appendix H: Expenditure Tables

ALABAMA LSTA PROJECT EXPENDITURES SUMMARY

		PROJECT TITLE/ Activities	FFY 2018	FFY 2019	FFY 2020	FFY 2018 LSTA EXPENDITURE	FFY 2019 LSTA EXPENDITURE	FFY 2020 LSTA EXPENDITURE	THREE YEAR (FFY 2018, FFY 2019, FFY 2020) EXPENDITURE TOTAL	PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE WITHIN GOAL	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL LSTA EXPENDITURES
Goal 1	Professional Development	Consulting Services	X	X	X	$ 191,227	$ 171,240	$ 109,271	$ 471,738	88.66%	6.08%
		Professional Training	X	X	X	$ 33,118	$ 11,570	$ 9,476	$ 54,164	10.18%	0.70%
		New Directors Orientation	X	X		$ 4,243	$ 1,948	$ -	$ 6,191	1.16%	0.08%
		GOAL SUB-TOTAL				$ 228,588	$ 184,758	$ 118,747	$ 532,093	100.00%	6.86%
Goal 2	Lifelong Learning	Resource Sharing and Access	X	X	X	$ 745,507	$ 785,428	$ 886,105	$ 2,417,040	38.97%	31.17%
		Blind and Physically Handicapped	X	X	X	$ 435,229	$ 545,822	$ 515,285	$ 1,496,336	24.13%	19.30%
		Collection Development	X	X	X	$ 245,450	$ 297,275	$ 423,153	$ 965,878	15.57%	12.46%
		Online Tutoring	X	X	X	$ 269,800	$ 244,600	$ 244,600	$ 759,000	12.24%	9.79%
		STEM	X	X	X	$ 64,248	$ 78,998	$ 60,000	$ 203,246	3.28%	2.62%
		Youth and Family	X	X	X	$ 46,327	$ 49,671	$ 105,937	$ 201,935	3.26%	2.60%
		Summer Library Program	X	X	X	$ 28,802	$ 27,158	$ 18,440	$ 74,400	1.20%	0.96%
		Literacy	X			$ 65,500	$ -	$ -	$ 65,500	1.06%	0.84%
		Local History		X		$ -	$ 11,371	$ -	$ 11,371	0.18%	0.15%
		Workforce Development	X			$ 7,000	$ -	$ -	$ 7,000	0.11%	0.09%
										0.00%	0.00%
		GOAL SUB-TOTAL				$ 1,907,863	$ 2,040,323	$ 2,253,520	$ 6,201,706	100.00%	79.99%
Goal 3	Information Access	Technology Upgrade	X	X	X	$ 269,852	$ 261,239	$ 274,273	$ 805,364	12.99%	10.39%
		IT Support Services	X	X	X	$ 106,759	$ 3,243	$ 2,665	$ 112,667	1.82%	1.45%
		Document Delivery and Access		X		$ -	$ 50,831	$ -	$ 50,831	0.82%	0.66%
		Statistics Program	X	X	X	$ 12,775	$ 12,775	$ 12,775	$ 38,325	0.62%	0.49%
		GOAL SUB-TOTAL				$ 389,386	$ 328,088	$ 289,713	$ 1,007,187	16.24%	12.99%
		LSTA PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION				$ 4,411	$ 7,954	$ -	$ 12,365	0.16%	0.16%
		GRAND TOTAL				$ 2,530,248	$ 2,561,123	$ 2,661,980	$ 7,753,351	100.00%	100.00%
		ALLOCATION				$ 2,530,248	$ 2,561,123	$ 2,661,980	$ 7,753,351		

Appendix I: Web-Survey Report

ALABAMA LSTA Survey Summary

https://app.alchemer.com/explorer/report-view/id/6507177/view/24821

Findings

The survey received a total of 82 responses, 52 of which were complete. As shown in Figure 1, 98% of respondents (51) indicated that they are from a public library and 2% of respondents (1) indicated "other" which was specified as being from a public and regional library system. Directors made up 98% of respondents (51) and managers or a department head represented the other 2% of respondents (1). Figure 2 shows the overall breakdown of job roles.

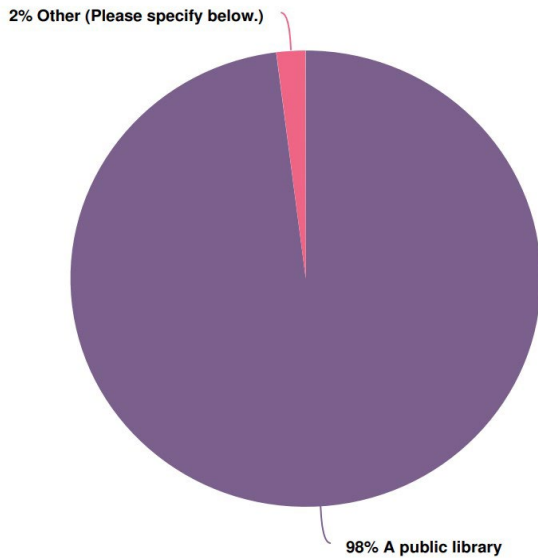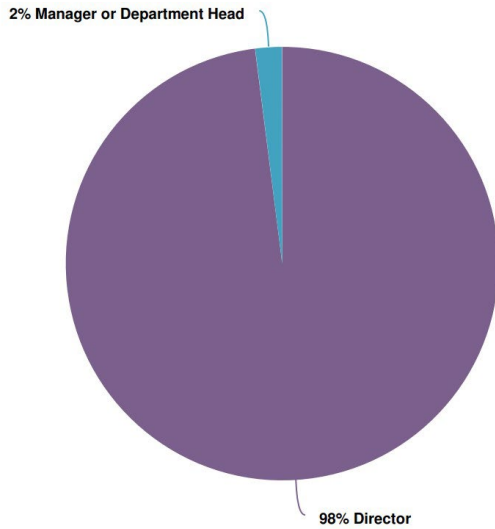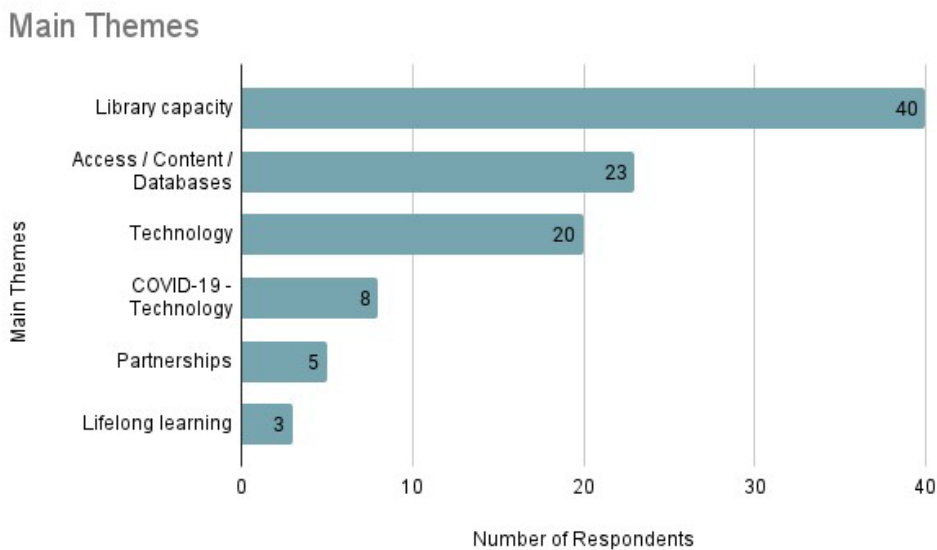**Figure 1. The type of library in which respondents work**

2% Other (Please specify below.)

98% A public library

Figure 2. Role of respondent within their library

2% Manager or Department Head

98% Director

Looking back

Figure 3. Main themes discussed by respondents.
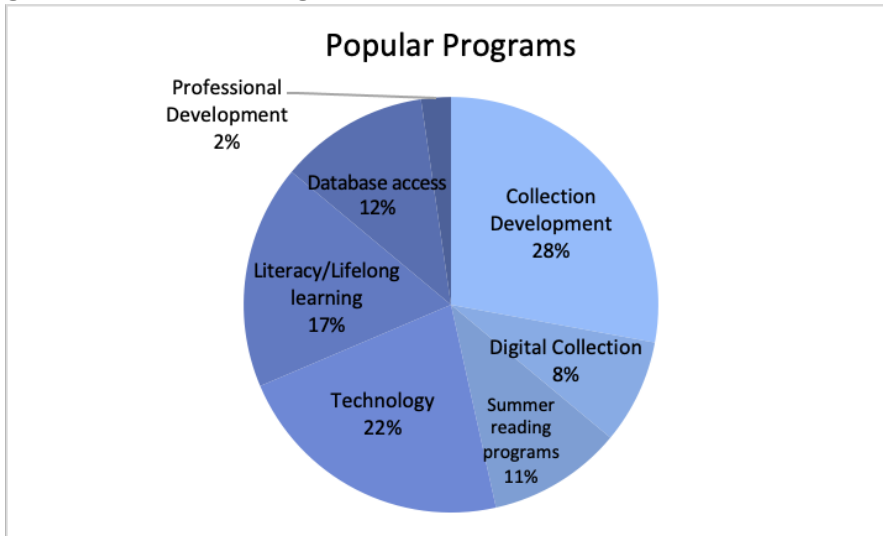

Main Themes

This question received 52 responses. Several programs and grants were praised; however, collection development was indicated the most as the most impactful on the library and their communities by 46% of respondents (24). Thirty-six percent of respondents (19) indicated updating library technology was the second most impactful benefit to their library. Fifteen percent

of respondents (8) specifically mentioned that the updates in technology made the lockdown due to COVID-19 smoother because of updated digital collections in place.

Figure 4. Impactful programs.

Popular Programs

- Professional Development 2%
- Database access 12%
- Literacy/Lifelong learning 17%
- Technology 22%
- Collection Development 28%
- Digital Collection 8%
- Summer reading programs 11%

Collection Development has flourished because of LSTA funding. We have been able to build out library collections in areas that we may not have been able to otherwise.

Our greatest impact has been Collection Development (SLD) and Strengthening Youth & Family (SLD) grants. Our library is in a rural area and these grants have enabled us to update our nonfiction books, which is important when patrons are looking up credible information.

We received the LSTA Technology Grant (SLD) last year and we were able to replace all our old 2013 patron computers (8), 2 librarian computers, and two printers. Our old computers were out of date and now thanks to the new ones, we offer patrons better computer services. We live in a very rural town, population about 1630, and most in town have no computers and internet so they come here.

Collection Development is vital to my library. We would not have books on the shelves without the LSTA funds.

Library service in our community is better because of the investment of LSTA funds because our library has been able to participate as a modern and robust library in terms of our collections, in particular, our e-collections as we were one step ahead of COVID, and our patrons has access to electronic materials because we had purchased them with LSTA funds prior to the pandemic!

Nine respondents commented that the summer reading programs impacted positive impact on the communities they serve. Some comments on summer reading programs include:

> *We have used ours for our Summer Reading Programs. This has made a huge difference in our numbers. We were able to reach more children with the these funds. Even programs during the pandemic benefited with these funds. We were able to provide grab and go packages, free books, and online programming.*

> *Every year the Summer Reading Program is a big part of our service to our school age patrons and the assistance from APLS is absolutely vital in making it the success that it is.*

> *Summer Reading Program-- APLS saves us time with the planning/organization and materials supplied for summer reading.*

Looking Forward

Participants were then asked to consider changes to LSTA investments in the next five years and provide suggestions to improve library services in Alabama. There were forty-three respondents for this question. Twelve (28%) respondents indicated that they would not change the way investments are done, commenting that the way funding is done now has been beneficial. Some additional comments include:

> *I believe no changes are needed in the way the LSTA funds are used for our public libraries. It is very beneficial the way LSTA is used now.*

> *I feel like the LSTA funds are being equitably distributed in ways that benefit the most people throughout the state.*

> *I believe the LSTA dollars are being wisely invested. APLS has made good use of the funding and even in the lean years have tried to make sure all libraries that applied were helped in some way.*

Six (13.9%) respondents shared that additional funding for technology updates and two (4.6%) respondents indicated that increased focus on maintaining digital collections would be a beneficial change. Specific comments include:

> *More focus on digital collections and digital presentation offerings. Perhaps an investment in recording equipment for libraries who need to have a more online presence. Continued funding for new equipment and technology.*

> *I would like to see LSTA funds more easily accessed for technology purchases at specific libraries. Our library is small and unable to purchase new technology or a regular*

basis. Having to use our LSTA grant for this purchase can be difficult and worrisome as we are not guaranteed we will receive the funds.

Technology is continually changing and in the next five years technological updates will be needed to keep up with the changing world of technology.

I would love to see a statewide electronic resources platform for sharing a core collection of eBooks and materials.

Three (6.9%) respondents mentioned that they would like to see funding allocated to marketing their services to their communities:

I was unclear on whether LSTA funding can be used for marketing/awareness. If so, I think any money that is spent on Television, radio, Billboards, or any other kind of marketing would be very important. We talk to people all the time who were not aware of the many services available (for FREE) in their community.

I wish that APLS had a statewide advertising campaign (television, billboards, etc.) to keep what great things we do in the minds of citizens.

One place that Alabama libraries could improve is the marketing of our services to our communities. LSTA funds might be used for the creation of promotional tools available to all libraries or a consultant to help libraries figure out how to better reach their patrons. Having professionally made templates or even just teaching folks how to better use Facebook and other free or cheap online tools (like Canva or unsplash) would benefit us all.

Some other suggestions for funding allocation include state-wide programs for lending digital and print content to benefit the more rural communities, changing the policy ban on construction, virtual outreach and programs for all ages. Specific comments are as follows:

A state-wide book lending program like PINES in Georgia. We have fewer book patrons, and they tend to be older people. Younger patrons want ebooks and downloadable sources like movies.

We do wish Congress would reconsider the ban on construction. That would be very beneficial to more "rural" areas like ours.

I vote that the overall policy be changed to include building facilities !!

I believe that LSTA Grants would be of a benefit in supporting library security. Some libraries can't afford security cameras and that is extremely important in the children's department.

I feel it would benefit our state to have a children's platform for story time and learning centers. We will continue our virtual and in house programs. But it would be nice to have our state look at ways to reach out virtually in all age groups.

Covid has taught us the benefit of offering virtual services such as story time. Could LSTA funds be used to develop centralized virtual services? So that all libraries could link to one virtual story time developed and created by the State Library.

Additional Comments

Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments about Alabama's LSTA program. Feedback includes:

APLS has worked with libraries to make the process as easy as possible given that it is federal money and requires much paperwork.

We love the program in general and enjoy the ability to offer additional programs and services to our community which would otherwise be truncated under our current budget.

I think the improvements to the application have been good.

LSTA funding is a wonderful gift to Alabama libraries. We are grateful to have a state who shares this funding in so many ways both on the statewide level and through individual subgrants.

We so appreciate the State taking over the funding of Ancestry. Our patrons are very interested in genealogy. We have classes and a club. This enables us to fund other databases that assist our patrons like Newspapers.com and Heritage. 32 LSTA funding is a wonderful gift to Alabama.

I have only one complaint about our LSTA program. The forms are sometimes very frustrating to fill out. However, I believe that is a technical issue between my city computers and APLS. I do not believe it is widespread, so I feel that it is a minor inconvenience that is greatly rewarded by the funds that have been given to my library through the LSTA program. I must also say that our team of Librarians at APLS are amazing. They are always supportive and work with our Alabama Libraries to help us in any way possible.

Honestly, the application process is quite extensive and could be an impediment/deterrent for those small libraries that do not have sufficient staff/time to apply.

The application process is a bit redundant and lengthy.

I find the application and reporting process somewhat complicated and intimidating. It could be more intuitive.

It is very difficult to find the time to fill out a complicated and thorough application, knowing that there is no guarantee that the library will receive funding. Otherwise, the process is fairly straightforward, and works well.

I would like to see smaller libraries be able to obtain more money to expand in order to meet the community's wants and needs. Plus, we could offer more services for our patrons.

I have been applying for LSTA for twenty years. Early on the application was easier and more straightforward. Now the application is just hard. The applicant must restate the same information numerous times, it is very frustrating. Several times I have applied to be told we did not fund those programs this year. Maybe whoever makes those decisions could announce that ahead of time. This year we will fund collection development, next year technology, etc.

Without Alabama's LSTA program we would not be able to offer the much-needed services to our community!!!

Appendix J: Partnerships

Alabama Bicentennial Commission

Alabama Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

Alabama Council of the Blind (ACB)

Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH)

Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH)

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS)

Alabama Humanities Alliance (AHA)

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB)

Alabama Library Association (ALLA)

Alabama Regional Autism Network (AL-RAN)

Alabama Virtual Library (AVL)

Alabama Supercomputer Authority (ASA)

Alabama Tourism Department

Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL)

Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA)

Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP)

Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD)

Health InfoNet of Alabama

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

National Federation of the Blind (NFB)

National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS)

University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS)

U.S. Census Bureau

Veterans Affairs (VA)

Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)

Back Cover

Alabama Public Library Service
Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)
Grants to States Program Implementation Evaluation
Federal Fiscal Year 2018 - Federal Fiscal Year 2022

Evaluators:
Martha Kyrillidou, Ph.D., M.L.S., M.Ed.
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Commissioned by:
Dr. Nancy C. Pack, Director, Alabama Public Library Service