

2018-2022 LSTA FIVE-YEAR PLAN EVALUATION

MISSISSIPPI LIBRARY COMMISSION



May 27, 2022

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EVALUATION SUMMARY

The Mississippi Library Commission (MLC) developed its 2018-2022 Five-Year LSTA Plan to provide guidance for the Commission's use of federal LSTA funds and to establish desired goals and outcomes for its programs. This external evaluation reports the results of the Mississippi Library Commission's combined efforts in the last five years.

RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION

1. To what extent did your Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards each goal?

Goal	Status
Goal 1 - Enhance the Technological Environment of Mississippi Libraries <i>Technology support and services, Create Partnerships, and E-rate guidance and support</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
Goal 2 - Support and Enhance the Library Workforce <i>Consulting Services and Continuing Education</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
Goal 3 - Strengthen Libraries by Sharing Resources <i>Shared Resources and Reading Programs</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
Goal 4 - Serve All Mississippians <i>Talking Book Services</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
Goal 5 - Empower Libraries <i>Competitive/Non-competitive grants and Cooperative Agreements</i>	<i>Achieved</i>

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

MLC Goal and Program	Measuring Success Focal Area
Goal 1 - Enhance the Technological Environment of Mississippi Libraries	Institutional Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology support and services • Create Partnerships • E-rate guidance and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve library's physical and technology infrastructure

MLC Goal and Program	Measuring Success Focal Area
Goal 2 - Support and Enhance the Library Workforce	Institutional Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consulting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve library operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the library workforce
Goal 3 - Strengthen Libraries by Sharing Resources	Information Access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve users' ability to discover information resources Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve users' ability to discover information resources Improve users' formal education Improve users' ability to participate in their community
Goal 4 - Serve All Mississippians	Information Access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking Book Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources
Goal 5 - Empowered Libraries	Various
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitive/Non-competitive grants and Cooperative Agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can cover all intents

3. Did any of the following groups represent a substantial focus for your Five-Year Plan activities?

Yes, each of the MLC's five goals focused on the library workforce and external stakeholders, and allocated more than 10% of LSTA funds for the programs associated with each goal.

PROCESS EVALUATION

1. How have you used data from the old and new State Program Report (SPR) and elsewhere to guide activities included in the Five-Year Plan?

While MLC does not solely use SPR reports for planning, the Commission does utilize the data in those reports to support the Commission's decision-making. This allows for guiding activities and adapting to any changes or trends displayed through the data.

2. Specify any changes you made to the Five-Year Plan, and why this occurred.

The Commission has made no interim changes to its Five-Year Plan.

3. How and with whom have you shared data from the old and new SPR and from other evaluation resources?

MLC relies on its annual reports to inform internal discussions and to share summary information with its Board of Commissioners. Those annual reports are based upon the same data entered into the SPR.

METHODOLOGY

The Commission engaged with the author of this report in October 2021 to conduct the evaluation outlined by IMLS Guidelines for Five-Year Evaluation. The evaluator reviewed the SPR and annual reports, met with Commission staff and led a series of focus groups to gather input from the library community. The evaluator also administered a survey to gather input into the outcomes as established in the five-year plan. After delivery of the final report, the evaluator will make himself available to MLC's leadership team to address questions based upon the analysis and explore any potential follow-up regarding the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2013-2017 EVALUATION

There were eight recommendations in the prior five-year plan evaluation. They are shown below along with an assessment of progress based upon findings from the current evaluation. Pursuant to discussions with MLC staff, reviews of the annual reports, and the recorded outcomes from the evaluator's focus group meetings, it was apparent that the MLC uses quantitative and qualitative data to inform their programming and processes.

PAST RECOMMENDATIONS	STATUS
<p>1. Increase efforts to measure outputs and outcomes and to use those measures to inform ongoing efforts. This may include staff development for both MLC staff and Mississippi library staff on general statistics, survey analysis and outcomes. This should also include a regular program to gather input that may be done with annual surveys, focus groups or some other means.</p>	<p>ACHIEVED</p>
<p>STATUS RATIONALE: <i>From the last evaluation, the MLC changed the goals for this current plan to expand the number of goals from three to five. Moreover, every program for each goal had distinct outputs and outcomes assigned to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs annually.</i></p>	
<p>2. Increase efforts to promote awareness of MLC programs and services to the library community including a better understanding of related staff roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>ACHIEVED</p>
<p>STATUS RATIONALE: <i>The MLC uses Librarianship 101, Regional Frontline Training, Refresher training for Directors coupled with normal electronic and face-to-face communication to keep library workforce updated of MLC programs and services.</i></p>	
<p>3. Continue to offer the consulting, continuing education and network development programs. These are critical areas of support for Mississippi libraries. In addition, continue to adapt to changing needs and technologies in the delivery of these programs as the Commission has done during this plan.</p>	<p>ACHIEVED</p>
<p>STATUS RATIONALE: <i>Although network development was turned into a different goal name under Technology Support and Services, consulting services, continuing education, and technology support were rated highly from library directors in the focus group meetings and the survey administered by the evaluator.</i></p>	
<p>4. Continue to develop and promote self-service tools such as the director's guide, policy development guide and trustees' handbook. If the Commission is forced to reduce services due to funding cuts, low-cost, self-service tools may help mitigate the reductions.</p>	<p>ACHIEVED</p>

PAST RECOMMENDATIONS	STATUS
<p>STATUS RATIONALE: <i>The MLC staff created more virtual programming in the form of YouTube-based recordings of meetings and sessions from Director orientation trainings. Other guides and handbooks were updated and created on an as-needed basis.</i></p>	
<p>5. Reconsider the outputs and outcomes for the network development program. It is unclear whether these are the right measures for this program.</p>	<p>ACHIEVED</p>
<p>STATUS RATIONALE: <i>This program was removed from the current plan. It is now considered an activity of the Technology Support and Services program of Goal 1.</i></p>	
<p>6. Continue to invest in resource sharing efforts that cost-effectively serve the needs of Mississippi residents. Create more engagement with Mississippi libraries to help identify the needs and opportunities for resource sharing that are most critical.</p>	<p>ACHIEVED</p>
<p>STATUS RATIONALE: <i>Elicited from interviews with the MLC staff, it is their desire to use the results from the focus groups and surveys along with the suggestions gleaned from annual surveys and support instances of the library stakeholders to continually adjust resources to meet the most critical needs of the Mississippi libraries.</i></p>	
<p>7. Reduce the complexity in the <i>Serving All</i> goal area to improve understanding. This could be accomplished by using a structure of sub-goals to better delineate the various components of each current program. Increase promotion and understanding for these programs in the next five-year plan.</p>	<p>ACHIEVED</p>
<p>STATUS RATIONALE: <i>The <i>Serving All</i> goal was changed to Goal 4 – <i>Serve All Mississippians</i>. The only program under this new goal is the <i>Talking Book</i> services. This change clarified the benefits and outcomes of the program.</i></p>	
<p>8. Continue to provide subgrants to libraries along with the current support structure as funding allows.</p>	<p>ACHIEVED</p>
<p>STATUS RATIONALE: <i>The grant program continued during this current plan. There was a shift to only provide non-competitive grant funding under those guidelines. MLC staff commented that the decision was made to ensure equitable distribution of funds among all library systems.</i></p>	

CONCLUSIONS

1. **Maintain Quality Support.** Continue to offer the technology support services, consulting, and continuing education in the same manner as the current plan. Results from stakeholders of the MLC felt that without the different types of support provided it would be difficult for their systems to help their communities.
2. **Continuing Education and Consulting.** Seek more input from the library workforce on ways they would prefer training and the types of training for library staff members. Some worthwhile suggestions gleaned from the focus group meetings and evaluator survey are as follows:
 - a. Rewards program – The MLC could implement a program to incentivize library staff to promote continuing education and help them improve their job skills, such as digital badging?
 - b. Levels of training – build levels or tiers of training for different types of library staff.
 - c. Alternate formats of training – Create virtual training options for the current face to face programs. Consider creating activities that are housed on the MLC YouTube channel.
 - d. Consultants – expand the number of consultants, even if part-time and regional
 - e. Communities of Practice – create groupings of library systems to create opportunities for library systems to come together to share experiences and knowledge in a virtual or traditional setting. This practice would pair well with levels of training if the top level of training was designed as a train-the-trainer concept.
3. **Shared Resources.** Continue to remain innovative in your shared resource and database efforts that cost-effectively serve the needs of Mississippi residents. Create more engagement with Mississippi libraries to help identify the needs and opportunities on a more regular basis. See item 6 for a strategy.
4. **Grants.** Continue to provide grants to libraries along with the current support structure as funding allows. If funding is expanded, consider either increasing funding amounts for non-competitive grants or allocate a smaller portion of monies and awards for competitive grant rounds. The grants are deemed the most essential LSTA program for each Mississippi library system.
5. **Awareness.** Expand the communication methodology of information and continuing education for library systems. One example gleaned from focus group responses is providing more usage statistics for programs like Talking Book Services, kits, and the Mississippi Center for the Book on a semi-annual basis. The intent is for library directors to have a better understanding of the needs of their patrons.

6. **Opportunity for Responsive Improvement.** Implement a systematic feedback plan using the library's workforce to constantly evaluate and advise the MLC in a formative and summative manner. Consider using the groupings of library systems used in the focus groups as advisory councils to get their views of new and current initiatives. Although designs of programs and plans are shaped by site observations, support incidents, meetings, and surveys, this strategy may prove more effective to provide a robust plan that benefits more stakeholders.

7. **Next Five-Year Plan.** The MLC staff made significant progress in efficient programmatic implementation from the 2013 – 2017 plan to this most recent plan. This progress was accomplished by the MLC using a combination of recommendations from past evaluations and stakeholder input to design the current plan. Build upon the success of those planning strategies as you shape the 2023 – 2027 LSTA Five-Year Plan by creating more awareness of cost-benefits of programs, usage statistics, and broad MLC processes when asking for stakeholder input.

RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION

1. TO WHAT EXTENT DID YOUR FIVE-YEAR PLAN ACTIVITIES MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS EACH GOAL?

GOAL 1 – ENHANCE THE TECHNOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT OF MISSISSIPPI LIBRARIES

In its first goal, the MLC sought to enhance the technological environment of Mississippi libraries by offering support and services through a variety of programs and projects that will address external and internal factors around technology needs that impact their operations.

Programs	Outputs	Outcomes
Technology support and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of help desk tickets resolved • Number of websites hosted • Number of hours of library site visits made by the MLC’s technology staff per year • Number of technology training hours taught per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve library’s physical and technological infrastructure
Create Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of help desk tickets resolved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve library’s physical and technological infrastructure
E-rate guidance and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of help desk tickets resolved • Number of hours of library site visits made by the MLC’s technology staff per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve library’s physical and technological infrastructure

Status	Description
Achieved	The Mississippi Library Commission demonstrated significant progress toward Goal 1 - Enhance the Technological Environment of Mississippi Libraries. In annual reports and SPR reports, the Commission presented evidence on nearly all outputs, and the results of the survey and the responses from the focus group participants provided direct evidence of all outcomes. The interviews of the MLC staff also provided evidence to corroborate qualitative and quantitative data of the goal’s outputs and outcomes. Therefore, this goal is deemed as achieved.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AND SERVICES

The MLC spent \$794,202.65 of LSTA funds on the technology support and services program, creating partnerships program, and E-rate guidance and support program as reported in the SPR for years 2018, 2019, and 2020. The Mississippi Library Commission offered advice, research, and support to each public library as needed in any area of technology. Some of the activities associated with this LSTA program included:

- IT help desk support
- Remote and on-site support with local and wide area networks
- Website creation, design, support, and hosting
- Procurement consultation and support
- Access to mobile technology program

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 100% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 96.55% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

CREATE PARTNERSHIPS

The Mississippi Library Commission staff collaborated with the Mississippi Information Technology Services agency to provide enhanced internet access. Some of the activities associated with this program included:

- Project management of Internet circuit connectivity
- Review of CIPA compliance of systems, as required by E-rate
- Liaison to obtain statewide pricing and options for library systems for Internet speeds

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 100% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 96.55% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

E-RATE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The Mississippi Library Commission staff helped in preparing and submitting all required forms so that libraries obtain the most value and understanding of the program which included:

- E-rate training on changes, guidelines, and administration of processes.
- Access to roundtable sessions to complete E-rate applications with individualized support.

- Acting liaison between libraries and USAC for program integrity assurance, review, and audits.
- Access to group communication capabilities (listserv) to share deadline reminders, problem solving, and knowledge base.

Technology Support and Services, Create Partnerships, E-rate Guidance and Support	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Number of help desk tickets resolved	1471	900	985
Number of technology site visits	104	71	193

In addition, the Commission staff notes the following accomplishments that directly relate to the outcomes set in the five-year plan:

- The MLC staff collaborated with other government entities and CSpire (state contract provider for broadband) to increase broadband speeds for public libraries.
- Provided free Office365 for public library staff.
- Provided one on one E-rate guidance and support.

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 100% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 100% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

FEEDBACK FROM THE LIBRARY SYSTEMS

In the focus groups, all three programs in this goal area were ranked as some of the more important LSTA programs offered by the Mississippi Library Commission. Many focus group participants and survey respondents expressed the need for wraparound technology support processes for not only their library system but also the communities related to that library system. More than a few systems offered examples that their libraries were the only way that school-aged children or job-seeking individuals had to have high-speed Internet access for school websites and job posting sites. Due to this provided service, they experienced better relationships with people in their communities.

Many participants appreciated every aspect of the Technology Support and Services. Participants gave numerous examples of networking, hardware, and software support. Due to reduced funding for libraries across the state, the systems need for Information Technology increased during the last five years. Quite a few participants of the focus groups stated that the benefits of the programs in this goal cannot be overstated, due to the cost-benefit analysis of the activities associated with each program.

CONCLUSIONS

- Continue to offer the E-rate guidance and consulting since it is constantly changing and is difficult to keep up to date to the rules and regulations surrounding that process. Few participants of the focus groups were able to handle this process without MLC support and guidance.
- Continue to provide advice, research, and support to each public library as needed in any area of technology. As new technologies arise, seek to find more cost-effective methods to provide support for library systems.

GOAL 2 – SUPPORT AND ENHANCE THE LIBRARY WORKFORCE

In its second goal, the Mississippi Library Commission sought to provide the Mississippi public library staff will have the advice, training, and support necessary to provide quality services and programs in their communities through the following programs.

Program	Outputs	Outcomes
Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of learning opportunities • Number of attendees • Satisfaction rating of each learning opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the library workforce
Consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of consulting hours • Number of site visits • Number of staff trainings on common topics • Number of custom staff trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve library operations

Status	Description
Achieved	The Commission demonstrated significant progress toward its second goal – Support and Enhance the Library Workforce. In annual reports and SPR reports, the Commission presented evidence on all outputs. Outcomes were measured in the survey administered by the evaluator. Focus group responses related to this goal complemented the quantitative data that the outcomes related to this goal were met. This goal is deemed to be achieved.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The MLC spent \$170,481.46 of LSTA funds on continuing education as reported in the SPR for years 2018, 2019, and 2020. The Mississippi Library Commission staff offered learning opportunities on a variety of topics designed to address the needs of library employees from directors to front-line staff, as well as trustees, including:

- Learning opportunities for library staff on traditional and emerging library topics through face-to-face and virtual meetings
- Annually assess library staff training needs
- Learning opportunities for library staff in response to identified needs

Continuing Education	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Number of Learning Opportunities	42	50	85
Number of attendees	1,554	2,750	2,550
Average satisfaction rating of all learning opportunities	93%	94%	94%

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 100% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 96.55% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

CONSULTING

The MLC spent \$351,720.87 on the consulting program as reported in the SPR for years 2018, 2019, and 2020. The Mississippi Library Commission staff provided advice, research, and support to each public library through a team of library consultants and other staff including:

- Advice to public library staff upon request
- Annually assess library staff needs based on topics queried
- Training to consultants in response to identified needs

Consulting	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Number of consulting hours	2,430	5,899	4,446
Number of site visits	68	101	68
Number of staff trainings (includes custom)	15	13	23

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 100% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 89.66% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

GOAL 3 – STRENGTHEN LIBRARIES BY SHARING RESOURCES

In its third goal, the Mississippi Library Commission sought to provide Mississippi libraries’ strong, diverse collections available to all Mississippians so that they may discover resources and engage in their communities by sharing resources, information, and access through the following programs.

Program	Outputs	Outcomes
Reading Programs	Number of reading programs held Number of participants Survey results Number of partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve users’ ability to discover information resources • Improve users’ ability to obtain and/or use information resources
Shared Resources	Number of items available in MLC’s collection Number of items available across all Mississippi public library collections Number of items shared statewide Number of reference queries received Number of items cataloged Number of electronic resources available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve users’ ability to discover information resources • Improve users’ formal education • Improve users’ ability to participate in their community

Status	Description
Achieved	The Commission demonstrated significant progress toward its third goal – Strengthen Libraries by Sharing Resources. In annual reports, SPR reports and meetings with staff, MLC presented evidence on all outputs. Outcomes were measured in the survey administered by the evaluator. Focus group responses corroborated the quantitative data reported. Thus, this goal is deemed to be achieved.

READING PROGRAMS

The MLC spent \$ 38,532.85 on the reading programs as reported in the SPR for years 2018, 2019, and 2020. This program contains the Mississippi Center for the Book and summer library program activities and training.

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR THE BOOK

The Mississippi Center for the Book is the state affiliate of the Library of Congress Center for the Book program. The center promotes books, reading, literacy and libraries. Through the Center for the Book, the MLC partners with other organizations like the Humanities Council and the Arts Commission. From the stakeholders' perspective gleaned from focus group responses, this activity is the least valuable of the goal.

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 37.93% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 100% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

SUMMER LIBRARY PROGRAM

The Commission provides access to the Collaborative Summer Library Program so libraries can share a central theme, activities, and programming. MLC provides consulting, continuing education and materials from the Collaborative Summer Library Program to support this program.

Reading Programs	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Number of reading programs held	3,579	1,872	3,375
Number of participants	119,118	162,788	149,194

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 96.55% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 100% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

SHARED RESOURCES

MLC spent \$1,837,226.26 on the Shared Resource program as reported in the SPR for years 2018, 2019, and 2020. The Shared Resources program includes a wide variety of activities designed to increase access to information for all Mississippi residents including materials collections, databases, Beehive Resource Sharing System, and access to special collections at the Mississippi Library Commission.

DATABASES/MATERIALS

The MLC uses LSTA funds to cover LearningExpress and other online subscription databases that are available to patrons of the Mississippi Library Commission.

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 100% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 100% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

BEEHIVE RESOURCE SHARING

The MLC provides access to Beehive Resource Sharing, a shared virtual database of public library holdings used for interlibrary loan. MLC's collections are also available to all libraries via Beehive. These include additional copies of high demand titles, government publications and more resources.

Shared Resources	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Number of items shared statewide	13,198	9,215	7,200
Number of reference queries received	30,178	20,729	27,294
Number of items catalogued statewide	127,621	98,078	139,370
Number of electronic resources available	65	64	66

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 100% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 100% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

GOAL 4 – SERVE ALL MISSISSIPPIANS

In its fourth goal, the Mississippi Library Commission sought to provide Mississippians, including those with visual and physical disabilities, access to materials in the appropriate format through the following programs.

Program	Outputs	Outcomes
Talking Book Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of patrons • Number of materials circulated • Number of outreach events attended • Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources

Status	Description
Achieved	The Commission demonstrated significant progress toward its fourth goal – Serve All Mississippians. In annual reports, SPR reports and meetings with staff, MLC presented evidence on all outputs. Outcomes were measured in the survey administered by the evaluator. Focus group results in this area were consistent with quantitative data. Therefore, this goal is deemed to be achieved.

TALKING BOOK SERVICES

The Mississippi Library Commission spent \$420,556.43 on the Talking Books Program as reported in the SPR for years 2018, 2019, and 2020. This service is an affiliate of the Library of Congress's National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled. The program's intent is to provide access to braille, large print, audiobooks, and descriptive video collections as well as technology, consulting and training with activities including:

- Access to resources in appropriate formats, professional staff, and adaptive equipment
- Identification of individuals and institutions that qualify for the service
- Partnerships with other organizations to further program goals

Talking Books	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Number of patrons	2,430	2,585	2,638
Number of materials circulated	131,370	128,536	111,601
Number of outreach events attended	20	20	10
Satisfaction with service via survey	96%	n/a	94%

The MLC distributed a patron survey in FY2019 that revealed that the program received good to excellent ratings from 96% of the respondents. Some quotes from the same fiscal year were as follows:

"I have been using talking books since the late 1970s. If I didn't have this service, I would be totally lost. Thank all of you who change our lives with these books. You have no idea how much a person depends on your service."

"I have really enjoyed being able to have books in my life again. I used to be an avid reader. Macular Degeneration changed that. You restored an important part to my happiness."

"I have been receiving talking books since 1995 and give them the credit for making my life worth living."

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 55.17% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 100% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

FEEDBACK FROM THE LIBRARY SYSTEMS

The Talking Books Services are the most complex to focus group participants. From interviews with MLC staff, it may be due to MLC handling most of the patron support for this service.

CONCLUSIONS

- Consider new ways to engage library systems in this area. Monthly reports of each system's patron usage would help in this area based on focus group feedback. Directors noted the importance of the program. But they also noted a feeling of lack of awareness of its value to their communities.
- Incorporate a "train-the-trainer" model for the library workforce on the overview of TBS and recruitment strategies for those in their communities.

GOAL 5 – EMPOWER LIBRARIES

In its fifth goal, the Mississippi Library Commission offered subgrants to provide funding opportunities for libraries to determine what services are best needed in their communities and provide funding for resources to meet those needs through the following programs.

Program	Outputs	Outcomes
Competitive Subgrants	Various	Various
Noncompetitive Subgrants	Various	Various
Cooperative Agreements	Various	Various

Status	Description
Achieved	The Commission demonstrated significant progress toward its fifth goal – Empower Libraries. In annual reports, SPR reports and meetings with staff, MLC presented evidence on outputs of the subgrants. Survey results and focus group results demonstrate the need of the programs, and the desired outcomes of the grants were met by the stakeholders. This goal is deemed achieved due to the reporting of both outputs and outcomes.

GRANTS

During 2018, 2019, and 2020, the Mississippi Library Commission funded a total of 400 non-competitive subgrants with expenditures of \$1,086,304.02. These subgrants, available to all public library systems in the State of Mississippi, funded a variety of projects including material collections, technology, professional development, and the Beehive Resource Sharing System. The Commission did not fund any competitive subgrants or cooperative agreements.

Although grants' funding amounts were non-competitive in nature, the grant process still applied to this type of grant. In support of the grants, the MLC staff helped during all phases of the grant process from idea generation to reporting by grant awardees. This includes both consultative one-on-one assistance and continuing education workshops on grants that advise grant applicants about the process, related laws/regulations/policies and about outputs/outcomes.

Among recent improvements made to this service include:

- Assessing available grant needs
- Creating grants around the identified needs
- Monitoring reporting for adherence to rules and regulations

In the survey administered by the evaluator:

- 100% of respondents agreed or partially agreed that this program achieved its outcome.
- 100% of respondents agreed that the program has maintained or improved since 2017.

FEEDBACK FROM THE LIBRARY SYSTEMS

Subgrants was the most popular program offered by the Commission. More participants appreciate the noncompetitive-only nature of the subgrants and were positive about the reasoning behind the changes in the program. The noncompetitive grants provide the opportunity for equitable distribution of the grant funding in a period of reduced funding. The MLC maintains that competitive grants could return if funding increased in a manner that could maintain equitable distribution of funds across library systems.

CONCLUSIONS

- Continue to provide grants to libraries along with the current support structure as funding allows.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT DID YOUR FIVE-YEAR PLAN ACTIVITIES ACHIEVE RESULTS THAT ADDRESS NATIONAL PRIORITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE MEASURING SUCCESS FOCAL AREAS AND THEIR CORRESPONDING INTENTS?

The Mississippi Library Commission’s five goals align to the six Measuring Success Focal Areas: (1) lifelong learning, (2) information access, (3) institutional capacity, (4) economic & employment development, (5) human services, and (6) civic engagement and LSTA goals 1 through 7 as shown in the table below and in the Mississippi Library Commission’s Five-Year LSTA Plan, 2018-2022.

MLC Goal and Program	Measuring Success Focal Area	LSTA Goals
Goal 1 - Enhance the Technological Environment of Mississippi Libraries	Institutional Capacity	<i>LSTA Goals 2, 4, and 7</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology support and services • Create Partnerships • E-rate guidance and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve library’s physical and technology infrastructure 	
Goal 2 - Support and Enhance the Library Workforce	Institutional Capacity	<i>LSTA Goals 3 and 4</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting • Continuing education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve library operations • Improve the library workforce 	
Goal 3 - Strengthen Libraries by Sharing Resources	Information Access	<i>LSTA Goals 1, 2, 4, and 7</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve users’ ability to discover information resources • Improve users’ ability to obtain and/or use information resources 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve users’ formal education • Improve users’ ability to discover information resources • Improve users’ ability to participate in their community 	
Goal 4 - Serve All Mississippians	Information Access	<i>LSTA Goals 1, 4, 5, and 7</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking Book Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve users’ ability to obtain and/or use information resources 	
Goal 5 - Empowered Libraries	Various	<i>LSTA Goals 1 through 7</i>
Competitive/Non-competitive grants and Cooperative Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cover all intents 	

3. DID ANY OF THE FOLLOWING GROUPS REPRESENT A SUBSTANTIAL FOCUS FOR YOUR FIVE-YEAR PLAN ACTIVITIES?

- a. Library workforce (current and future)
- b. Individuals living below the poverty line
- c. Individuals that are unemployed/underemployed
- d. Ethnic or minority populations
- e. Immigrants/refugees
- f. Individuals with disabilities
- g. Individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills
- h. Families
- i. Children (0-5)
- j. School-aged youth (6-17)

Yes, the Commission placed emphasis (an average of greater than 10% of LSTA funds) on the library workforce through all its LSTA programs. The programs were:

- Technology Support and Services
- E-rate Guidance and Support
- Continuing Education
- Consulting Services
- Shared Resources
- Databases
- Mississippi Center for the Book
- Summer Library Program
- Large Print Collection
- Kits
- Beehive Resource Sharing System
- Talking Book Services
- Grants

PROCESS EVALUATION

1. HOW HAVE YOU USED DATA FROM THE OLD AND NEW STATE PROGRAM REPORT (SPR) AND ELSEWHERE TO GUIDE ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN?

It is evident that the MLC's decisions are data driven. While the Commission does not expressly use SPR reports to guide its decisions, the Commission does use the data to create those reports to inform internal and external planning and decision-making. The separately prepared annual reports provide the data in form that is clear and actionable.

2. SPECIFY ANY CHANGES YOU MADE TO THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN, AND WHY THIS OCCURRED.

The Commission made no interim changes to its Five-Year Plan.

3. HOW AND WITH WHOM HAVE YOU SHARED DATA FROM THE OLD AND NEW SPR AND FROM OTHER EVALUATION RESOURCES?

The MLC uses the same data sources to generate both annual reports and the SPR entries. The MLC does not share SPR reports internally or externally except in its monitoring of grants. MLC uses its annual reports to inform internal staff and summary information with its Board of Commissioners.

METHODOLOGY

1. IDENTIFY HOW YOU IMPLEMENTED AN INDEPENDENT FIVE-YEAR EVALUATION USING THE CRITERIA DESCRIBED IN THE SECTION OF THIS GUIDANCE DOCUMENT CALL SELECTION OF EVALUATORS?

MLC contacted the Research and Curriculum Unit (RCU) at Mississippi State University in October 2021 seeking to engage the services of an independent evaluator from the department. The meetings between the MLC and the Research and Curriculum Unit outlined the requirements of the evaluation, timeline of the evaluation, and the structure of the final report. The MLC selected RCU based upon the evaluations conducted for state agencies, programs, and grants and the experience of the evaluator.

2. DESCRIBE THE TYPES OF STATISTICAL AND QUALITATIVE METHODS (INCLUDING ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS) USED IN CONDUCTING THE FIVE-YEAR EVALUATION. ASSESS THEIR VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY.

Descriptive statistics were used with quantitative data from the survey, MLC annual reports and the SPR reports. Qualitative analysis was applied to the focus groups. All documents reviewed are valid and reliable. Focus group participation was moderate; however, the results are complementary to the quantitative results gathered from other sources. The evaluator conducted four focus groups remotely with Mississippi library staff – mostly directors. The evaluator also conducted a survey after the focus group meetings. There was consensus among the directors on the LSTA programs from the focus groups and the survey. As with any evaluation process, the MLC should follow up with stakeholders in future meetings and visits around the considerations and recommendations.

3. DESCRIBE THE STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THE VARIOUS STAGES OF THE FIVE-YEAR EVALUATION AND HOW YOU ENGAGED THEM.

The external evaluator met virtually with the MLC staff to better understand the programs and services offered. He then met virtually holding four focus groups. The libraries were assigned to focus groups based on population served and input was from library directors.

4. DISCUSS HOW YOU WILL SHARE THE KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WITH OTHERS.

The evaluator will share this report with MLC's leadership team and will make himself available for follow-up conversations with the leadership team and with MLC's commissioners. The Commission will publish this report on its website and will discuss with staff, commissioners, and library directors.

APPENDIX A. LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Meaning
MS	Mississippi
MLC	Mississippi Library Commission
IMLS	Institute of Museum and Library Services
LSTA	Library Services and Technology Act
RCU	Research and Curriculum Unit
SPR	State Program Report
TBS	Talking Book Services

APPENDIX B. LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Meetings with Mississippi Library Commission Staff – Virtual (Zoom)

The external evaluator conducted two meetings via Zoom to conduct the interviews with MLC staff in a timely manner. There were also numerous other meetings held with Jennifer Peacock, Deputy Director of Administrative Services.

Name	Title
Alex Brower	Information Services Director
Jennifer Peacock	Deputy Director, Administrative Services
Jennifer Todd	Technology Services Director
Lacy Ellinwood	Lead Library Consultant
Mary Rodgers Beal	Talking Books Services Director
Tracy Carr	Deputy Director, Library Services

Focus Group 1: Zoom Meeting Attendees (7)

Name	Title	Library or System
Cristin Chandler	Director	Choctaw County Library System
Denise Saucier	Director	Long Beach Public Library
Elissa Tucker	Director	Sharkey-Issaquena County Library
Jeannie Burton	Director	Benton County Library
Monique Joseph	Director	Wilkinson County Library System
Patty Bailey	Director	Yalobusha County Library
Shameka Conner	Director	Noxubee County Library
Note: Six administrators did not attend who were assigned to this focus group.		

Focus Group 2: Zoom Meeting Attendees (4)

Name	Title	Library or System
James Pinkard	Director	Covington County Library System
Mary Caradine	Interim Director	Carnegie Public Library
Mary Ann Griffin	Director	Sunflower County Library
Pamela Plummer	Director	Judge Armstrong Library
Note: Nine administrators did not attend who were assigned to this focus group.		

Focus Group 3: Zoom Meeting Attendees (9)

Name	Title	Organization
Amanda McDonald	Director	Marshall County Library
Cynthia Hudson	Director	Pine Forest Regional Library
Carol Phares	Director	Pearl River County Library System
Erin Busbea	Director	Columbus-Lowndes Public Library
John Brdecka	Director	Hancock County Library
Katrina Castilaw	Director	Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library
Phillip Carter	Director	Starkville-Oktibbeha County Public Library System
Regina Graham	Director	Dixie Regional Library System
Sidney Cobb	Director	Washington County Library
Note: Five administrators did not attend who were assigned to this focus group.		

Focus Group 4: Zoom Meeting Attendees (11)

Name	Title	Organization
Angela Stewart	Director	Jackson-George Regional Library System
Darlene Morgan	Director	Pike-Amite-Walthall Library System
Jeff Tomlinson	Director	Lee-Itawamba Library System
Josh Haidet	Executive Director	Mid-Mississippi Regional Library
Karyn Walsh	Director	Laurel-Jones County Library System
Kim Corbett	Interim Director	Jackson-Hinds Library System
Lori Barnes	Director	First Regional Library
Mara Villa Polk	Director	Central Mississippi Regional Library
Sarah Crisler-Ruskey	Director	Harrison County Library System
Sean Farrell	Director	The Library of Hattiesburg, Petal & Forrest County
Tonja Johnson	Executive Director	Madison County Library System
Note: Two administrators did not attend who were assigned to this focus group.		

APPENDIX C. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Mississippi Library Commission Library Services and Technology Act Five Year Plan, Federal Years 2018-2022
2. Mississippi Library Commission Five Year Strategic Plan for the Fiscal Years 2020 – 2024
3. Mississippi Library Commission Library Services and Technology Act Five Year Plan Evaluation Report, Federal Years 2013-2017
4. IMLS Grants to States Program Report, 2018
5. IMLS Grants to States Program Report, 2019
6. IMLS Grants to States Program Report, 2020
7. List of library programs mapped to IMLS focal areas and state legislative mandates
8. Mississippi Library Commission Annual Report, FY 2017
9. Mississippi Library Commission Annual Report, FY 2018
10. Mississippi Library Commission Annual Report, FY 2019
11. Mississippi Library Commission Annual Report, FY 2020
12. Mississippi Library Commission Annual Report, FY 2021
13. MLC Subscription Database Statistics, FY 2017
14. MLC Subscription Database Statistics, FY 2018
15. MLC Subscription Database Statistics, FY 2019
16. MLC Subscription Database Statistics, FY 2020
17. MLC Subscription Database Statistics, FY 2021
18. Summer Library Program Statistics, FY 2017-21
19. LSTA Grant Application, FY 2022
20. LSTA Manual, FY 2022

MLC'S FIVE-YEAR LSTA PLAN – A BRIEF VIEW, 2018-2022

These are the goals along with a general sense of the activities in MLC's current Five-Year Plan.

Enhance Technology Environment	Support Workforce	Shared Resources	Serve All	Empower Libraries
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help Desk• Network• Websites• Procurement• Partnerships• E-Rate• Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuing Education• Consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resource Sharing• Center for the Book• Summer Library Program• Beehive System• Cataloging• Research Specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talking Book Services• Create and Leverage Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grants• Cooperative Agreements

APPENDIX E. FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

As most of you learned from a recent library directors meeting with the Mississippi Library Commission, the Mississippi Library Commission is currently evaluating its Five-Year LSTA Plan from the years 2018-2022. Each state library administrative agency, i.e., the Mississippi Library Commission, is required to independently evaluate any activities funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The Mississippi Library Commission has contracted with Dr. Sean Owen, Assistant Director of Research and Development at Mississippi State University, to conduct the external evaluation. Part of this process involves gathering information from the library community and reviewing reports and other data related to the plan. If you wish to learn more about the Grants to States program and Mississippi's past plan and its corresponding evaluation report, please go to the following Institute of Museum and Library Services' web page at <https://www.ims.gov/grants/grant-programs/grants-states>.

The intent of the focus groups is to gather information from external stakeholders of the MLC to determine the outcomes from the funding provided by the IMLS. The discussions during our time in the Zoom focus group will only center around the goals outlined in the plan. We will review those goals and discuss the activities included in those goals like technology, continuing education, consulting and LSTA subgrants.

For the focus groups that were held online using Zoom video conferencing software, 31 directors from 31 libraries attended one of four focus group meetings, though only 29 of them responded to the survey. This report is a summary of those focus group meetings.

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

The following pages are a summary of the four focus groups led by the evaluator on behalf of the Mississippi Library Commission to gather feedback on its Five-Year LSTA Plan. The summary below is written in hopes to facilitate meaningful responses, dialog, and action. Major discussion items with important feedback and considerations are numbered for easy reference, while other items appear bulleted at the end of each section.

Although only 31 of the 53 possible library system directors attended the focus groups, one should note that the insights gleaned from the meetings can be used as a complement to the quantitative data yielded from SPR and annual reports, the evaluator survey, and other MLC surveys. The responses from participants paralleled the quantitative data reviewed for this plan.

AT-A-GLANCE

The following chart displays the consensus of the focus group respondents' comments demonstrating awareness, importance, and satisfaction of programs funded by LSTA during the evaluation time frame. Comments are categorized into three categories low, moderate, and high. These characterizations about each program are also consistent with results from the survey completed by library system directors in Mississippi.

	Awareness	Importance	Satisfaction
Technology Support and Services	High	High	High
E-rate Guidance and Support	High	High	High
Continuing Education	High	High	High
Consulting Services	High	High	Moderate
Shared Resources	High	High	High
Databases	High	High	High
Mississippi Center for the Book	Low	Low	High
Summer Library Program	High	High	High
Large Print Collection	High	Moderate	Moderate
Kits	Moderate	Moderate	High
Beehive Resource Sharing System	High	High	High
Talking Book Services	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Grants	High	High	High
Overall	High	High	High

OVERALL COMMENTS

1. There has been vast improvement in the areas of awareness, importance, and satisfaction for all LSTA programs. This improvement demonstrates MLC's responsiveness to the input provided by its stakeholders.
2. Like any organization, there are a few areas that can use continual improvement based on participant feedback.
 - a. Shared Voice – Directors have appreciated the increased call by MLC to provide input. They do feel like they need more data from MLC regarding usage or cost-benefit to provide a more educated input to the MLC's requests for evaluation or piloting.

- b. Communication – Remain consistent in the channels of communication for categories of information. Train library systems repeatedly of each program’s goal and medium.
3. Participants commented the most on these programs that are critical to them: E-rate guidance and support, Grants, Technology Support and Services, Consulting Services, Continuing Education, Shared Resources, and Databases.
 - a. Continue to invest in efforts to ensure that these programs remain strong and are responsive and adaptive to library needs.
4. Expand the instructional methodologies and catalog for technology and library trainings.
 - a. Communication Methodology – Provide directors a mix of channels. Staff prefers longer trainings to help with focus. Use the same channels but add more reflection points.
 - b. Rewards Program – Could there be some way to incentivize library staff to promote continuing education and help them improve their job skills? Digital badging could be one mechanism.
 - c. Levels of Training – Build levels or tiers of training for different types of library workforce.
 - d. Alternate Formats – Create video options for trainings so they can always refer to it with presentations. For Story Walk kits, if the librarians could get demos/videos of how to use it or other items. Create a demo channel on YouTube.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AND SERVICES

The MLC sought to enhance the technological environment of Mississippi libraries by offering advice, research, and support to each public library as needed in any area of technology. The outcome of this program is to address external and internal factors around technology needs that impact the library system’s operations. The activities in this program include IT help desk support, remote and on-site networking support, website design, creation, support and hosting, and procurement consultation and support of IT-related items. Focus group participants expressed a consensus of amazement how much work is done by the MLC with so few staff members. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 1 - Enhance the Technological Environment of Mississippi Libraries.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Consider expanding staff in this area if funding allows due to breadth of services and demand.
2. Continue to provide the same activities for this program based on participants’ feedback.
3. Continue to do “check-ins” with systems relative to the activities of this program. Since IT is not comfortable for some directors, reaching out on a scheduled, unprompted manner may yield a more proactive approach to support due to lack of experience of the stakeholders.

SPECIFIC ITEMS

- Participants found that the services like the design and hosting of library system websites (with ADA compliance), and the provision of client access licenses of Office365, which includes Outlook email with spam filtering were two of the most necessary services provided by the MLC to library systems. This observation is supported by the focus group responses and that 48 of 53 library systems use Office 365 and 29 of 53 use the website hosting.
- Any technology service that is provided by the MLC free is invaluable to library systems (i.e., technology repair and remote desktop and server support through Bomgar software). These offerings lessen the need for libraries to either hire IT professionals or subcontract IT services within their existing budgets.

E-RATE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The MLC, when requested, helped in preparing and submitting all required forms so that libraries obtain the most value and understanding of the program. This program includes E-rate training, individual and peer support activities, and liaison role assumption between the libraries and USAC. Survey and focus group results showed agreement that this program was perceived as one of the most important the MLC offers to systems. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 1 - Enhance the Technological Environment of Mississippi Libraries.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Continue to help systems in this area. The majority of participants in the focus groups commented they would be unable to complete the necessary forms by themselves in order to provide Internet services to their patrons without help in this process.

SPECIFIC ITEMS

- The amount of guidance and support for new staff members was invaluable.
- Participants gave numerous examples of on-site visits to help with IT emergencies and security camera consultations.
- Participants would like a way to have a digital, remote training experience even if the training is offered face-to-face.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The MLC's Continuing Education includes a catalog of offered learning opportunities on a variety of topics designed to address the needs of library employees from directors to front-line staff, as well as trustees. From meetings with MLC staff, the overarching theme of this program is to help the library workforce with information and support. Due to the pandemic, most of the programming shifted from in-person to virtual and pre-recorded webinars. Both the survey results and the focus group responses echoed a strong sentiment this program was essential to maintain consistent across library systems. Participants felt like they had a strong voice in customizing opportunities to their needs. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 2 - Support and Enhance the Library Workforce.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Explore opportunities to connect library directors with one another to build community and to share knowledge. Participants saw a role for the consultants to bring this community building aspect for all library staff and especially among library directors. Other specific suggestions included:
 - a. Regional consultant assignments and regional directors' meetings (in addition to statewide meetings)
 - b. More time for networking/sharing at directors' meetings
 - c. Complete development and increase promotion of the library director's guide. Many participants relayed that the guide was a very useful tool.
 - d. Continue efforts to make webinars a major component of continuing education offerings. Participants greatly appreciated the webinars and specifically mentioned (1) savings—time and money—on travel and (2) flexibility to watch recorded webinars when most convenient. Participants did suggest that the Commission offer shorter webinars when the topic allows and/or split long recordings into shorts so that participants can focus on the item of most immediate need. Finally, participants recognized that webinars are by design less interactive and suggested that the Commission explore ways to increase engagement in this format.
 - e. Continue to offer continuing education opportunities in a variety of formats. Overall, participants appreciate the variety of formats including central and regional live workshops, live and recorded webinars, and on-demand staff development workshops.

2. Explore potential enhancements to the Librarianship 101 workshop. This topic was discussed at all workshops and is among one of the most critical activities of the Commission. Suggestions included:
 - o Refine curriculum to ensure that the topics covered meet the needs of Mississippi libraries.
 - o Build in recognition for program progress/completion (e.g., badging).
 - o Consider alternate formats such as a series of standalone workshops or webinars.

- Explore ways to share information about staff trainings with library directors. The directors want to know (1) what staff have learned and (2) the quality of the training so they can manage expectations of staff performance.

SPECIFIC ITEMS

- Participants would like a recorded option for all meetings and trainings. Directors could use those recordings as refreshers for topics covered. Video transcripts could prove more valuable for use in other training topics.
- Other ideas for trainings:
 - Demonstration videos of how to use items (Example: StoryWalk kits). Create a demonstration channel on YouTube.
 - Literacy for adults
 - Recruitment and engagement strategies for all ages
 - Focus a little more on how to address the “hybrid” world. Participants would like to see some training and consultation how to create digital experiences coupled with the physical event for patrons.
- Keep providing time in training events for open discourse among attendees like the symposiums.
- Build a Communities of Practice for types of library staff. This could provide Directors and other staff a way to share with each other as they do at on-site training events.

CONSULTING SERVICES

Consulting services provided by the MLC staff included providing advice to public library staff, annual assessment of library staff needs, and the provision of training to internal staff in response to needs. Participants in focus groups named this program among the most necessary to library systems. Participants even suggested finding more funding to increase salaries of MLC staff and expansion of staff. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 2 - Support and Enhance the Library Workforce.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Since consultants are so valuable to the systems, MLC should keep consistency between systems and designated consultants to promote more relationship building. All MLC consultants have met the needs of the stakeholders.
2. Consider prioritizing consultants’ salary levels if budget or structure to help with the suggestion if funding will allow (LSTA money). This could also improve quality of consultants long-term when new consultants are hired.

3. Consider regional consultants to defray costs of travel. They may have different perspectives if were more embedded in rural communities.

SPECIFIC ITEMS

- Participants expressed always having a fast response from consultants on any topic.
- Some considered this the most valuable program, especially with its value to smaller libraries with limited staff.

DATABASES

The databases funded in part by LSTA include LearningExpress, MAGNOLIA, Hoopla, and other online subscription databases. Participants of the focus group paralleled the survey results showing high awareness of the programs and the need for the program. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 3 - Strengthen Libraries by Sharing Resources.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Continue to evaluate the need for specific database subscriptions to ascertain the cost-benefit of the subscriptions. Use quantitative and qualitative (director input) to help with your formative evaluation.
2. Present usage results to directors annually.

SPECIFIC ITEMS

- Participants spoke to wanting a self-paced training orientation module in this area.
- Participants would like data on program use after a pilot or in second round of a pilot phase.

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR THE BOOK

The Center for the Book is a Library of Congress program committed to libraries, reading, literacy and books. The MLC partners with organizations like the Humanities Council to provide reading and discussion program (last 2 years – Table Topics virtual discussion series). This program comprises several Commission services designed to promote reading and literacy. Due to the pandemic, virtual programming opened services to a wider audience than in recent years. Participants in the focus groups and results from the survey were mixed on the awareness and need of the program. This

sentiment has maintained from the last evaluation. The MLC should consider making this a topic of a future directors' meeting to get insight into why the responses are mixed. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 3 - Strengthen Libraries by Sharing Resources.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Increase promotion of the Center for the Book program. The tepid response may be due to lack of clarity of the program's importance.
2. Explore ways to better implement the program in the library systems.

SPECIFIC ITEMS

- There was not any negative feedback about the program.

SUMMER LIBRARY PROGRAM

The MLC provides support for summer library program through statewide participation in the multi-state, Collaborative Summer Library Program. This program consists of six programming efforts – three repeat ones for children, one for early literacy, one for teens, and one for adult programming. All participants and respondents noted awareness and the need for the program. This sentiment has shifted from the previous evaluation, where it was noted that the responses may be resource-driven. Most are using the program now to shift funding to other areas and use this as a provided service. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 3 - Strengthen Libraries by Sharing Resources.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Continue to offer training (self-paced courses) in this area. Specific suggestions include:
 - a. Share implementation ideas from past years.
 - b. Consider strategies for scalability of resources.
2. Continue to gather input from library systems on what sub-programs are effective each summer and what those pain points are for the systems relative to implementation.

LARGE PRINT COLLECTION

The MLC program offers older large print titles to library systems to supplement local collections. The shipping to libraries is free of charge. There is also no limit to the number of titles that can be checked out by a system. All systems were aware of this service and deemed it important to its clientele. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 3 - Strengthen Libraries by Sharing Resources.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Continue to present at external events, like Rotary Club, on behalf of systems advocating for the use of this program and others.
2. Consider providing the presentation for systems to use in those events.

SPECIFIC ITEMS

- There were requests for more recent titles.

BEEHIVE RESOURCE SHARING SYSTEM

The Beehive Resource Sharing System connects in real-time to every library in the state. This program allows systems to not have to buy specialized resources if located nearby. Moreover, it presents a single point of access to all catalogs within Mississippi. Most focus group participants in charge of smaller systems stated that the Beehive System helped expand their collections in times of reduced budgets. Moreover, the program was found to provide resources that are highly specialized to its patrons. This response was true regardless of library system size. The results of the survey and focus group responses found this program to be of higher need than others. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 3 - Strengthen Libraries by Sharing Resources.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Continue to generate communications and provide training around this program. Consider simplified infographic marketing for stakeholders.
2. Continue to remind library workforce of ways to efficiently use the Beehive System to expand collections and provide unique resources to its patrons.
3. Leverage directors of “high use” of the Beehive System to speak of the ways they use the program. Capture this to use in static and dynamic training methodologies.

SPECIFIC ITEMS

- There was lack of clarity among a few directors around this program. Although in the current training, the MLC should consider other ways to continually communicate this resource to stakeholders.
- As opposed to evaluation report from the previous five years, most of the directors who participated in the focus groups or surveys were knowledgeable of this program. The lack of awareness of some could be due to some of the new directors coupled with the pandemic.

TALKING BOOK SERVICES

The MLC uses the Talking Book Services (TBS) program administered by the Library of Congress's National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled program to equalize library service for Mississippi residents who are blind or visually impaired or who have other physical or intellectual barriers to using the library. These services include providing braille books and audiobooks to eligible residents, related training and consulting to libraries and long-term loan collections of large print books to libraries. Patrons can call to talk to consultants to check databases for books. This service yields at least 500 calls monthly from patrons. Participants of the focus groups agreed this is a worthwhile service, but they did mention they would like to get a periodic report to see if they could help with more promotion of the services since the MLC handles this for the state. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 4 – Serving all Mississippians.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Expand communication to systems for this program. Since the MLC handles all of these patron requests, most systems hear indirectly about the impact of the program. They see the value and need for the program. The MLC should consider:
 - a. Reporting semi-annually or annually a system's report for TBS usage. It is hard for systems to accurately gauge value compared to other programs without data.
 - b. Provide TBS presentation to library staff to use for marketing TBS.
 - c. Training library staff on TBS support to help offset MLC support requests in this area.
2. Expand using a train-the-trainer approach for library staff. Then, staff could train external stakeholders who oversee patrons of the TBS.

SPECIFIC ITEMS

- Participants would like more information about who is served by this program.
- One participant found that after doing outreach presentations to the communities, Talking Book Services was a hit with nursing homes, assisted living, and senior care facilities. TBS has improved the overall well-being of patrons of the service.

GRANTS

The Mississippi Library Commission used to provide both competitive and noncompetitive subgrants to libraries with LSTA funds in past five-year plans. During this Five-Year Plan, noncompetitive subgrants were the only type of subgrant that were available to participants. MLC commented this decision was based on two factors: (1) limited funding in recent years and (2) the attempt to ensure equity among different sized systems. In this area, participants discussed the entire process from application to reporting. Each system had the same amount of grant funding available if they chose to write a grant application that adheres to the IMLS rules and regulations. Participants noted that the grants program is most important program area, providing needed funding and the greatest flexibility to apply funds locally as needed in survey responses and focus group conversations. This program is aligned to the MLC Goal 5 – Empower Libraries.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Consider offering training in the form of mini-online courses that are self-paced in all aspects of grants. This type of training could also help with continual reminders of what items are acceptable for subgrant applications.
2. They want to continue to receive support from MLC staff regarding applications and reporting around grants.
3. The biggest issue that libraries face, as illuminated in all the focus group meetings, is increased desire for MLC advocacy for infrastructure funding. Directors realized that these types of funding sources are limited in nature. However, they need more monies for interior and exterior library enhancements for patrons. They also expressed a need training for grants using talking points to help with funding requests that are in written and presentation forms.
4. There are quite a few “success” stories from grant funding that could not only be great public relations for the libraries but also good funding ideas for other libraries. Consider an efficient way to capture those successes to share perpetually (online course).

SPECIFIC ITEMS

- Participants expressed the need for assistance for opportunities for external grants to help with capital improvements. They realize this was outside of the scope of LSTA exactly. But the consultation and training around the grants program could help in this area.
- A few participants did express a wish for competitive grants to return or the non-competitive funding pool amounts per system to increase. However, they do realize this is contingent on funding.

APPENDIX F: SURVEY RESULTS

There were 29 responses to the survey from administrators of library systems in Mississippi, though 31 administrators attended the meeting.

Technology Support and Services

(Help Desk, Network Support, Websites, Procurement)

1. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	28	1
%	96.55%	3.45%

2. This service has increased your library's ability to provide access to online information and resources for your community through improvement of your library's physical and technology infrastructure.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
n	22	7	0	0	0
%	75.86%	24.14%	0%	0%	0%

3. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
n	23	5	1
%	79.31%	17.24%	3.45%

E-rate Guidance and Support

4. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	28	1
%	96.55%	3.45%

5. This service has increased your library's ability to provide access to online information and resources for your community through improvement of your library's enhanced Internet access.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
n	26	3	0	0	0
%	89.66%	10.34%	0%	0%	0%

6. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	26	3	0
%	89.66%	10.34%	0%

Continuing Education

(Learning opportunities on a variety of topics designed to address the needs of library employees from directors to front-line staff, as well as trustees)

7. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	29	0
%	100%	0%

8. This service has increased your knowledge, skills and/or abilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	17	12	0	0	0
%	58.62%	41.38%	0%	0%	0%

9. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	16	12	1
%	55.17%	41.38%	3.45%

Consulting Services

(Advice, research, and support from a team of MLC library consultants/other staff)

10. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	29	0
%	100%	0%

11. This service has increased your knowledge, skills and/or abilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	21	8	0	0	0
%	72.41%	27.59%	0%	0%	0%

12. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	15	11	3
%	51.72%	37.93%	10.35%

Shared Resources

(Resource Library, Cataloging, Research Specialists)

13. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	29	0
%	100%	0%

14. This service has helped your library increase community engagement and has supported patrons' learning through reading.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	18	11	0	0	0
%	62.07%	37.93%	0%	0%	0%

15. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	12	17	0
%	41.38%	58.62%	0%

Databases

(Magnolia, Hoopla, LearningExpress, Online Subscriptions)

16. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	29	0
%	100%	0%

17. This service has helped your library increase community engagement and has supported patrons' learning through reading.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	16	11	2	0	0
%	55.17%	37.93%	6.90%	0%	0%

18. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	19	9	1
%	65.52%	31.03%	3.45%

Mississippi Center for the Book

(Library of Congress program committed to libraries, reading, literacy and books)

19. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	14	15
%	48.28%	51.72%

20. This service has helped your library increase community engagement and has supported patrons' learning through reading.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	5	6	17	1	0
%	17.24%	20.69%	58.62%	3.45%	0%

21. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	6	23	0
%	20.69%	79.31%	0%

Summer Library Program

(6 programming efforts - children, early literacy, teen, and adult programming)

22. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	29	0
%	100%	0%

23. This service has helped your library increase community engagement and has supported patrons' learning through reading.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	16	12	1	0	0
%	55.17%	41.38%	3.45%	0%	0%

24. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	12	17	0
%	41.38%	58.62%	0%

Large print collection

25. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	16	13
%	55.17%	44.83%

26. This service has helped your library increase community engagement and has supported patrons' learning through reading.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	10	5	13	1	0
%	34.48%	17.24%	44.83%	3.45%	0%

27. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	7	22	0
%	24.14%	75.86%	0%

Kits (Examples: Book club, STEM, Sensory)

28. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	16	13
%	55.17%	44.83%

29. This service has helped your library increase community engagement and has supported patrons' learning through reading.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	7	7	14	1	0
%	24.138%	24.138%	48.276%	3.448%	0%

30. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	17	12	0
%	58.62%	41.38%	0%

Beehive Resource Sharing System

31. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	26	3
%	89.66%	10.34%

32. This service has helped your library increase community engagement and has supported patrons' learning through reading.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	14	11	4	0	0
%	48.28%	37.93%	13.79%	0%	0%

33. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	13	16	0
%	44.83%	55.17%	0%

Talking Book Services

34. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	19	10
%	65.52%	34.48%

35. This service has helped your library increases the community's ability to obtain resources from your library.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	7	9	12	1	0
%	24.14%	31.03%	41.38%	3.45%	0%

36. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	7	22	0
%	24.14%	75.86%	0%

Grants

(Non-competitive subgrants offered to libraries that formally apply)

37. Did you use this MLC service between 2018 and 2022?

	Yes	No
n	29	0
%	100%	0%

38. This service has helped expand your library's capacity to meet the needs of your community.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
#	27	2	0	0	0
%	93.10%	6.90%	0%	0%	0%

39. How has this service changed since 2018?

	Better	Stayed the Same	Worse
#	20	5	4
%	68.97%	17.24%	13.79%

Rank the LSTA programs in the order of the ones that provide the greatest value to your library system (1 = Greatest Value to 18 = Least Value)

The following table is sorted from top to bottom in the order of the collective respondents' perception of greatest value for the LSTA programs (1 = Greatest Value to 18 = Least Perceived Value).

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation
E-rate guidance and support	1.00	7.00	2.62	1.40
Grants	1.00	14.00	2.97	3.85
Technology Support and Services (Help Desk, Network Support, Websites, Procurement)	1.00	15.00	3.66	3.15
Consulting	2.00	12.00	4.72	2.24
Continuing Education	2.00	10.00	5.72	2.29
Shared Resources (Resource Library, Cataloging, Research Specialists)	4.00	11.00	6.86	1.61
Databases (Magnolia, Hoopla, Learning Express, Online Subscription)	2.00	14.00	6.97	2.55
Summer Library Programs	4.00	11.00	7.72	1.80
Beehive Resource Sharing System	3.00	15.00	8.41	2.59
Collection and Circulations	8.00	14.00	11.21	1.40
Large print collection	3.00	15.00	11.21	2.66
Kits (Examples: Book club, STEM, Sensory)	6.00	15.00	12.07	1.80
Talking Book Services	7.00	15.00	12.17	1.95
Center for the Book	7.00	15.00	12.93	2.42
Cooperative Agreements (Other Grant Funding)	2.00	15.00	10.76	4.88

Why did you select the specific LSTA program #1 in the above question in greatest value?

Program	Reasoning
<p>E-rate guidance and support (6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-rate procedures change so much that it is excellent to have this type of continual guidance and oversight. With our libraries changing over from AT&T to C-Spire, MLC provided invaluable assistance. It also helps offset our budget costs to receive the E-rate funds. • I was torn between e-rate and grants but finally selected e-rate because without the help of MLC's E-rate consultant, I would never get everything filed from year to year and would be at risk of losing those funds provided by the discounts. This amounts to a considerable sum of money for our library system each year. • Technology is constantly changing. We recently went through some changes in personnel and the E-rate consulting as well as the technology assistance is crucial to maintain the level of service and access required by the public we serve. • The staff at MLC keeps us informed on any changes with the E-rate. They also guide us with completing forms and applications, making certain we don't make any errors. If we do have issues, they are eager to help. Without this support, we would have difficulty navigating the E-rate process and possibly lose funding due to a lack of knowledge. • There are a lot of details and regulations that must be correct and having Sharmaine go through this with us and make sure we get it right is very valuable to us. • Without E-rate, the library would not have the funding to provide free internet and other vital services to the public.
<p>Grants (19)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because the LSTA grants provided to public libraries enable libraries to provide more technologically advanced services to their patrons than they would otherwise. • Because most library systems in the state are largely underfunded. • Because it has always been great to help with the funding. • Because funds are low, and any amount will help. • Benton County Library System is very dependent on LSTA Grant Program. This is how we fund computer up-grades and new equipment, add to book budget for purchasing books and initiate other projects. • Grant funding is of the utmost importance to rural library systems. • Grant funds provide us with the opportunity to expand our services and try new services that usually would not get funded. • I selected Grants because these funds are vital for many libraries. They allow for the purchase of operating supplies, books and other materials that would not otherwise be possible due to limited budget constraints.

Program	Reasoning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants are the lifeblood of small, rural library systems like ours. Using LSTA grant funds, we have been able to purchase and maintain computers and printers, buy much-needed books, acquire movies, and much more. Grant funding is the only way we can make these purchases since our annual budget is so limited. The judicious use of LSTA funding over the years has allowed our system to provide access to technology and materials to the public that we could not have offered otherwise. Grant funding has helped us to be relevant and vital to the communities we serve. • Grants have allowed us to a number of technology-related projects we otherwise could not afford. • LSTA program provides computers and books that limited local funding is not able to provide for our library. • MLC has greatly improved this service in recent years and has allowed our library system to free up the funds we were paying for similar services and use it for other purposes. • MLC's LSTA grants provide our region with things that our region cannot afford on our own. • The grants program allows our library to conduct innovative projects to meet the informational needs of our community. • This is direct funding to our libraries to do projects that have direct results. We definitely felt the cuts in the last few years. If I could, I would also put consulting at the top because this is an essential resource as well that needs more funds to make sure there are enough consultants who stay long enough for us to build relationships with them. • This program allows libraries to make purchases and/or create programs we otherwise would not be able to engage in. • Without grant funding from/through MLC, most, if not all, of the public libraries in Mississippi would have to cut EVERYTHING to basic minimums.
<p>Technology Support and Services (Help Desk, Network Support, Websites, Procurement) (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tech support provided by MLC has helped us complete tasks for which we were otherwise unprepared. My small 2-person tech team is already overburdened. The same can be said for the E-rate guidance. • We are a small system and do not have IT staff. The Technology department and the support they provide has allowed us to provide updated technology for our patrons despite our lack of training and knowledge.

Do you have other suggestions to improve any existing LSTA program offered by the MLC?

There were 23 responses to this question that contained a suggestion. There were 6 responses to this question that did not state a suggestion.

- Also, MLC has simplified the grant paperwork in the recent past, and this has been very helpful to me. Our library system is small, and as director I have to wear many different hats. Grant paperwork is just one of many things I have to do, so I am grateful for anything that simplifies the paperwork.
- Be able to borrow the newer titles from the LP collection for 6 months.
- Bring back competitive grants.
- Bring back Professional Development grants. Having grant funds for this purpose 'sells' it to our regional board. Otherwise, they consider going to conferences a 'luxury.'
- Continue having a virtual option for trainings even when we are able to return to in-person.
- Continuing access to Hoopla or some e-book collection would be something that would greatly benefit the smaller library systems. Our small system struggles to have enough funds to provide an electronic collection, so this has really helped our system a lot.
- Find ways to up the funding to all the systems.
- I believe that the consulting needs more support. I understand that budgets/funding/prospective consultants are difficult to navigate but the consultants do provide an invaluable service to public libraries. They share grant opportunities, research subjects pertinent to the operation of public library systems, etc.
- I think that all libraries in Mississippi would agree that we are blessed to have these programs and the staff members affiliated with each program. I am extremely satisfied with the existing programs exactly as they are now and can think of nothing I would change.
- Keep Hoopla or a comparable program to provide free e-books/audio books for small systems that can't afford this service for patrons on limited funding
- Make kits easier to borrow and provide a wider variety of continuing education opportunities.
- Not at this time, but I do like the fact that all the LSTA grant monies are not competitive. This gives every library system some money, which is always helpful and sometimes life-saving.
- Please offer more grants. We desperately need more funding for the more exciting projects.

- Put every dime you can towards grant funds. Also, I do not know how you could do it, but increase the salaries of library consultants so that you can more easily retain staff in those positions.
- See above re: consultants. They are essential.
- Some programs like the large print collection and the kits we haven't utilized. It isn't that those programs would benefit our library system, but sometimes we forget that MLC offers these services. Frequent reminders from MLC through emails and conversations with the consultants may increase the use of these programs.
- We could have more help promoting the Talking Book Service and stats on usage.
- Would like to see stats of how many from our counties use the Talking Books Program.
- Yes - just have one amount [for grants] and not three small amounts. This limits what public libraries can do with the funding as far as projects and improvements.