

The State of Minnesota LSTA Five-Year Plan 2013–2017

Updated April 1, 2015

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INTRODUCTION

State Library Services' original LSTA 2013-2017 five-year plan was built through a stakeholder engagement process. With new leadership beginning in August 2013, we reached out to a wider range of people who are engaged with Minnesota's libraries. From one-on-one meetings with school library media specialists to presentations at the Minnesota Library Association's annual conference, we have intentionally asked how we can better serve the needs of Minnesotans. A 2014 Libraries and Service Delivery Consultant Group met six times to review library structures and service delivery. The conversations included a thoughtful look at how libraries will integrate new service models in the coming years.

The results of these efforts is an updated plan that retains our original goals yet provides a new context for the use of funds to address critical statewide needs and priorities.

Library Services and Technology Act and the Grants to States Program

The federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) is administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Through its Grants to States program, IMLS provides funding for libraries to develop and deliver innovative services that address local and statewide needs. In Minnesota, the program is administered by State Library Services, a division of the Minnesota Department of Education.

LSTA Grants to States priorities are to:

- Expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats, in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support such individuals' needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, and digital literacy skills.
- 2. Establish or enhance electronic and other linkages and improved coordination among and between libraries and entities for the purpose of improving the quality of and access to library and information services.
- 3. Provide training and professional development, including continuing education, to enhance the skills of the current library workforce and leadership, and advance the delivery of library and information services.
- 4. Enhance efforts to recruit future professionals to the field of library and information services.
- 5. Develop public and private partnerships with other agencies and community-based organizations.
- 6. Target library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills.
- 7. Target library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty line.
- 8. Develop library services that provide all users access to information through local, state, regional, national, and international collaborations and networks.

Within these priorities and the federal plan requirements, Minnesota's updated plan describes how LSTA funds will be used to address federal priorities while also meeting the varied needs of Minnesotans.

Mission

State Library Services aligns its mission with the Minnesota Department of Education's <u>vision of educational equity for all</u> and the <u>Governor's Seven Point Plan for Excellence in Education</u>. To achieve this, we work collaboratively with the Minnesota library community to create and deliver resources that address the educational, social, and cultural needs of Minnesotans.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Minnesota is affectionately known as a state that is "above average" in most respects. Yet the above average moniker belies several fundamental challenges faced by its residents. With a population that counts 18% of its residents as persons of color statewide, disparities in employment, educational achievement, and community engagement persist. Similar disparities are evident for people living in poverty. While each of Minnesota's 87 counties has a public library, people in greater Minnesota have more limited access to library services than residents of the Twin Cities metropolitan area which creates a geographic disparity. A closer look reveals several critical needs.

According to Minnesota Compass, Minnesota is ranked sixth in the nation for the number of adults with advanced degrees. At the same time, 45% of white but just 28% of African American Minnesotans hold advanced degrees. This finding is not surprising given recent data from Minnesota's K-12 schools. For example, average reading proficiency for students at all grade levels is 58.8%. Yet looking more closely at the percentage of students meeting third grade reading benchmarks – a key indicator of future success in school and later graduation – racial and economic disparities are evident:

- 34.8% of African American students, 30.8% of whom are living in poverty, are reading at grade level in third grade
- 34.9% of Hispanic students, 28.5% of whom are living in poverty, are reading at grade level in third grade
- 39.2% of American Indian students, 35.4% of whom are living in poverty, are reading at grade level in third grade
- 48.8% of Asian/Pacific Islander students, 29.8% of whom are living in poverty, are reading at grade level in third grade
- 66.9% of Caucasian students, 51.2% of whom are living in poverty, are reading at grade level in third grade

While the four year graduation rate shows steady increases for all student groups, with an overall rate of 81.2%, rates are as low as:

- 50.6% for American Indian students
- 60.4% for African American students
- 63.2% for Hispanic students
- 65.9% for students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch

By the most commonly used measures, poverty is decreasing in Minnesota and now stands at 11.2%. But it is experienced at higher rates by children, those who lack education, and the increasing number of Minnesotans who are people of color:

- 32.8% of Hispanic Minnesotans
- 32.4% of American Indians
- 23.4% of Black Minnesotans
- 11.3% of people with less than a bachelor's degree
- 15% of all children, including almost 50% of African American, 38% of American Indian, 30% of Hispanic and 20% of Asian children

The percent of working adults in Minnesota is 75.7% with a comparatively low unemployment rate of 4.6%. Yet a 2010 study by the Economic Policy Institute's Algernon Austin identified an employment disparity in the Twin Cities metropolitan area – at 20%, the unemployment rate for African Americans is three times greater than for whites. Unemployment Disparity, a 2013 report by the Minnesota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, provides a comprehensive review of the causes and consequences of the employment disparity noted by Austin. The report cites the twin pillars of a lack in educational attainment and poverty as root causes.

Minnesota's libraries – whether public, academic, or school – are key community partners that help to address these disparities through resources, innovative programs, and services that address local needs. Closing these gaps will help to address LSTA state plan guidelines and priorities and simultaneously achieve the goals articulated in the state's World's Best Workforce legislation. The World's Best Workforce acknowledges that an aging population, an increasing number of jobs that will require more than a high school diploma, and an achievement gap for students of color are all challenges to the state's long-term economic health.

The World's Best Workforce legislation, passed in 2013, recognizes that Minnesota must have students who are college-ready, career-ready, and poised to lead the state's workforce into the future. Its goals are to ensure that:

- All children are ready for school
- All third-graders can read at grade level
- All racial and economic gaps between students are closed
- All students are college- and career-ready
- All students graduate from high school

Serving All Ages

While providing educational opportunities that address the needs of at-risk children and youth is paramount, there is an equal need to ensure that adults who lack English language skills, work experience, access to the internet, and technology skills and live in poverty are well-supported in their efforts to attain employment, achieve educational goals, and engage with the community. Minnesota's libraries rely on well-trained staff, a strong technological infrastructure. and a high degree of collaboration to help Minnesotans make progress on educational and employment goals as well as to connect with library resources for lifelong learning. Statewide e-

content and a robust interlibrary loan network contribute to each library's ability to help residents overcome geographical challenges to improve their lives through library resource access.

Recommendations that emerged from a 2014 Libraries and Service Delivery Consultant Group echoed these needs and included a call for:

- Partnerships between public libraries and school districts that are focused on enhancing early learning opportunities, reducing summer learning loss, bolstering college/career readiness, and achieving other goals of the World's Best Workforce legislation
- A statewide collection of e-books that support school curricula, academic standards, and K-12 literacy

The recommendations also reiterated support for interlibrary loan and the services provided by the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library, both of which serve residents with challenges to accessing traditional library resources.

Addressing Areas of Need

Minnesota's 2013-17 LSTA Five-Year Plan addresses the needs of residents who are challenged to be successful in education, employment, and engagement with the community. The plan has two overarching focuses that position libraries as key community partners to strengthen individuals and contribute to more vibrant communities:

- 1. Expand services for learning, including access to information and education resources.
- 2. Establish and provide strong infrastructure services, including statewide initiatives that build the capacity of Minnesota's libraries to promote equity of access to the best library services for all Minnesotans.

Minnesota's 2013-2017 LSTA Five-Year Plan supports projects that address needs within identified goal areas. Annually, State Library Services intentionally shapes competitive and sole-source grant opportunities to ensure that LSTA resources are directed at the areas of greatest need. With an interest in encouraging local innovation, we dedicate a portion of funds to support a wide array of projects. As we develop grant opportunities each year, we consider new and emerging needs and reflect on how funded projects helped to meet plan goals in the prior year.

Need 1: Expand Services for Learning, Including Access to Information and Education Resources

This plan first identifies a need to expand collaborative services for learning, including access to information and education resources in all formats. A key need is strengthening partnerships between different types of libraries and between libraries and other community-based organizations. With robust partnerships, libraries will improve their capacity to work with people of all ages and abilities. In addition to addressing the goals articulated in the World's Best Workforce, the plan reflects needs in the areas of lifelong learning, continuing education, civic engagement, workforce development, and 21st century and digital literacy skills.

Goal One

1.0 To facilitate increased access to resources in all types of eligible libraries, especially through collaborative public and private partnerships, for the purposes of expanding programs and services supporting Minnesotans' needs for education, lifelong learning, continuing education, workforce development, and 21st century and digital literacy skills. (LSTA Priorities 3, 5, 6, 8)

Subgoals

- 1.1 Support literacy, including 21st century and digital literacy.
- 1.2 Provide educational opportunities for children from early learning through postsecondary, especially targeting children from birth through age 17 from families living in poverty or facing barriers such as language, race, ability, geography, or access to resources such as technology.
- 1.3 Promote lifelong learning and continuing education, including the enhancement and expansion of services and resources relating to health, access to justice, and workforce and community development.
- 1.4 Promote training and professional development, including continuing education, to improve and expand the current and future library workforce.

Goal One - Possible Activities

With an eye toward serving residents with the greatest needs – those living in poverty or from diverse cultural backgrounds – subgoal activities through 2017 may include projects that create and enhance collaborative programs that:

- Achieve World's Best Workforce goals and are directed at children from birth through college or postsecondary technical training, especially children living in poverty or facing barriers to success in school and in life.
- Build early literacy skills in children ages 0-8, their families, and caregivers and increase the capacity of library staff to implement research-based practices in programming.
- Enhance partnership with schools, community organizations, and agencies with a focus on those that provide services to underserved populations such as seniors, individuals with limited English proficiency, and/or disabilities.
- Develop 21st century and digital literacy skills in residents, and strengthen library staff knowledge and skills in effective end-user training.
- Expand lifelong learning and continuing education opportunities that increase Minnesotans' access to information; training to more effectively use health, legal, e-government, workforce, and community development resources.
- Increase teen and pre-teen engagement with libraries and use of library resources.

With an interest in creating more welcoming communities that build bridges between Minnesotans of different backgrounds and abilities, additional activities through 2017 may include projects that:

- Help all library patrons learn about the cultural needs, expectations, and customs
 of minority and immigrant populations to increase awareness and contribute to a
 sense of shared community and encourage the use of library services.
- Develop, implement, and evaluate programs including staff training to serve individuals with disabilities and other special needs.

Finally, with an interest in ensuring that Minnesota's libraries are staffed by well-trained professionals, activities through 2017 may include projects that:

- Promote leadership development and the recruitment of future professionals to the field of library and information services.
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of licensed School Media Specialists in improving information literacy skills of K-12 students and enhancing their ability succeed in school.

Need 2: Establish and Provide Statewide Initiatives to Build Capacity

Minnesota's second need is for statewide initiatives and capacity building related to technology. Statewide, regional, and local partnerships, networks, and collaborations are built on technology and link the collections and resources of all types of libraries to residents. Minnesotans place a high value on resource sharing. A statewide infrastructure allows libraries of all types to benefit from collections held across the state. Limited access to the internet and/or a lack of digital literacy skills prevents some Minnesotans from taking full advantage of these resources to succeed in school, connect with the community, and obtain jobs.

Improved coordination encourages and expands resource sharing and results in more costeffective and efficient library services. Particular needs include improving the quality of and access to library and information services across all types of libraries, and building the capacity of library staff at all levels to support the patron use of these resources.

Focus groups, conversations with stakeholders in 2013 and 2014, and the 2014 Libraries and Service Delivery Consultant Group all identified equitable statewide access to e-books and e-content as a top priority.

Goal Two

2.0 Through partnerships and statewide initiatives and networks, facilitate access, preservation, and sharing of resources in all types of eligible libraries locally, regionally, statewide, nationally, and internationally to support research, education, and innovation. (LSTA Priorities 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9)

Subgoals

- 2.1 Support technology and infrastructure initiatives and services that build the capacity of Minnesota's libraries to serve their patrons.
- 2.2 Support statewide initiatives and services that build the capacity of Minnesota's libraries and their staff to serve their communities.

Goal Two - Possible Activities

From 2013-2017, a broad range of capacity-building activities and statewide initiatives may improve access to library resources and services for all Minnesotans. These may include projects that:

- Support technology upgrades and improvements to regional and statewide networks.
- Promote collaborative efforts of school, academic, special, and public libraries to share collections virtually.
- Support the statewide physical and electronic delivery and sharing of resources among different types of libraries.
- Improve the capacity of the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library to provide digital content – including locally developed content – to its users.

Well-trained and well-supported staff are key to connecting Minnesotans with library resources. Thoughtful use of data helps libraries create plans to serve residents through innovative services and qualified staff. Through 2017, capacity-building activities may include projects that:

- Train staff on the Electronic Library for Minnesota (ELM) so that library users can more effectively benefit from the state's investment.
- Improve the ability of libraries through annual training opportunities to develop LSTA grant proposals that result in positive impacts on Minnesotans.
- Implement and promote professional development activities to meet the training needs of Minnesota library staff and provide quality, barrier-free services and programs to Minnesotans in LSTA Plan priority areas.
- Gather data annually from Minnesota's public libraries to improve state and federal planning efforts.

ASSESSING IMPACT

State Library Services and LSTA grant recipients propose and track outputs and outcomes for funded activities. Output measures may include, for example, the number of people served, number and types of programs implemented, amount and types of technology/ resources purchased, and/or the number of staff trained.

Outcome measures are uniquely developed for each LSTA project, based on its purpose and intended audience(s). State Library Services is increasing its capacity to establish and track outcomes for the projects it manages. We develop project plans that directly address the outcomes we seek, particularly related to the development and implementation of library services that address our statewide goals and increase the skills of Minnesota's library staff.

We encourage grantees to use outcome-based project planning that allows short-term outcomes to be measured. Likewise, we acknowledge that outputs are sometimes an effective way to demonstrate outcomes related to the use of library services. Grantees are also supported in using a variety of tools and approaches to measure the impact of programs – from pre-and post-surveys to observation and interviews – that complement output data.

Because developing, measuring, and reporting outcomes is new territory for many library staff, State Library Services is adapting its staff complement to include expertise in this area. We

anticipate that this will have a positive impact on the ability of Minnesota libraries to deliver outcomes that address LSTA priorities. We are eager to incorporate IMLS' new approach to measuring outcomes in our work and to developing the capacity of grantees to do so as well.

Communication and Public Availability

Minnesota's LSTA Five-Year Plan is publicly available on the Minnesota Department of Education's website. Further, we highlight specific projects through the department's website as projects are completed. We provide regular updates on the use of LSTA funds through our listserv and at meetings with stakeholders, including an annual progress report at the Minnesota Library Association conference. Additionally, State Library Services regularly shares information and solicits feedback about the LSTA Plan with the Minitex Policy Advisory Committee, regional and multitype library systems, the Minnesota Library Association, and Information Technology Educators of Minnesota (an association of school library media specialists and technology integration staff.)

Monitoring and Evaluation

State Library Services establishes a broad framework for the use of LSTA funds each year. Throughout the year we conduct site visits with competitive grantees and solicit feedback about progress toward our goals. We engage in rigorous self-assessment as a way to ensure that our projects are addressing plan goals and areas of need. State Library Services works with IMLS and Minnesota Department of Education staff to confirm that our use of funds adheres to federal quidelines.

We have adopted a continuous improvement approach to our work, reviewing processes and procedures on a regular basis to ensure that they are helping us to meet our goals in program administration. Working with the department's grants management staff, we complete a fiscal monitoring tool for grants over \$50,000. This helps to ensure accountability for the use of funds and that local policies and procedures support federal and state guidelines.

State Library Services assesses our progress in meeting Five-Year Plan goals annually as part of our budgeting process. We anticipate that summative evaluation of the Five-Year Plan will begin in earnest in federal fiscal year 2016 as we prepare to tell the story of the impact of federal funds on the lives of Minnesotans.