

Arizona Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) Plan 2003-2007 Evaluation

In Arizona, Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds are fundamental to the community services provided by libraries. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), an independent federal agency, provides LSTA funds to State Library Administrative Agencies using a population-based formula. Eligibility for these funds is dependent on submission and approval of a five-year State Plan. The comprehensive document details services provided by the state library, the basis for those services, and plans for providing and evaluating those services. The plan is needs-based, requires stakeholder involvement, must relate to LSTA purposes and must be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Evaluation of the 2003-2007 Five-Year LSTA Plan provided positive feedback on its goals and outcomes. The overarching goals in that plan created a flexible umbrella for action. Those goals were: Public Satisfaction, Access to Information, Information Technology, Cultural Diversity, Community Focal Point, Strategic Partnerships, Recruiting and Retraining, and Administration.

Under the 2003-2007 Plan the Arizona State Library applied LSTA funds to create a mix of competitive grants, targeted initiatives and statewide programs. The 2003-2007 Arizona LSTA Plan identified the following most prevalent external forces:

- Need for greater educational attainment
- Changing demographics
- Rapid urban growth and sprawl
- Stresses on children and families
- Need for greater access to health care
- Increased need for access to new technologies

2003-2007 LSTA Plan Evaluation findings from third-party interviews, surveys and stakeholder focus groups:

- There is a broad level of satisfaction with the Arizona State Library's current LSTA program. A high proportion of the individuals contacted for this evaluation expressed support for the current priorities and grant categories.
- Consistently, the projects examined for this evaluation have demonstrated that they have supported and advanced the broad LSTA goals formulated by the Arizona State Library. Among other significant results, these projects

have served to: improve public satisfaction, increase library use, improve access to information resources, improve access to and use of technology, and foster partnerships between the library and other cultural agencies.

- Across all the projects in this evaluation, the strongest common theme is strategic partnerships.
- The lifelong learning activities that resulted from these LSTA grants helped to make the library the hub of the community – a community focal point. This role was clear to librarians, community partners, and users.
- Arizona’s specific program priorities and grant categories are tailored to meet the needs of the Arizona library community. The practices and protocols that the Arizona State Library has developed to administer its LSTA program offer models that can be considered elsewhere. These practices have contributed to a successful LSTA program that has advanced overall state-level goals in Arizona, and could contribute in a similar fashion elsewhere.
- While there are strengths and challenges with any grant program, setting aside a portion of LSTA funding for State Library-initiated programs provides a number of opportunities for local libraries that might not otherwise participate in early literacy efforts. This protocol also provides access to statewide and national models that often do not co-exist with locally conceived and designed initiatives.
- In performing this comprehensive review of the early literacy efforts supported through LSTA funding, it is clear that significant progress has been made throughout the past four years. This progress has definitely affected Arizona’s children and families – and has also vitally changed how librarians think about their service delivery models and professional skills.
- LSTA funding, under the current Five-Year Plan, has supported eighteen library-based initiatives and three statewide efforts with an early literacy focus. This multi-level funding approach is rooted in the State Library’s belief that funding local libraries encourages innovation and community-based solutions, while funding more global opportunities ensures that libraries with fewer resources to develop and implement a new grant-based program are not left behind. The statewide efforts also create opportunities for libraries, regardless of their capacity, to participate in national models, best practices, and turnkey solutions for early childhood programming.