



STATE LIBRARY OF OREGON

2018-22 LSTA FIVE-YEAR EVALUATION,

FUTURE AREAS OF FOCUS: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR THE 2023-27 PLAN

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March 2022

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Overview

As part of the 2018-2022 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Five-Year Plan evaluation process, significant attention was paid to collecting the aspirations and opportunities for the State Library of Oregon from the Oregon library community. Tools used as part of the evaluation process — including a survey distributed statewide, focus groups, interviews, open virtual town halls, and independent contributions from members of the library community — allowed participants to share their thoughts on the future work of the State Library of Oregon. The opportunities for the State Library to explore in the next five-year plan were remarkably consistent across the engagement methods, pointing to a consistency of mission and the strength of the investments made by State Library staff and programs in the Oregon library community.

Members of the Oregon library community expect the State Library to maintain the high level of service it currently exhibits; the expectations for the members of the Oregon library community might best be summarized as “keep doing what you do, but even better.” For example, while members of the library community highlighted the high level of support and communication for different library types, library staff would like to see the State Library work outside of the silos of library type, and “broaden out to the library community as a whole, [to] support the *ecosystem* of libraries,” as one community college librarian shared, working across library types and geography, bringing libraries of different types together. Library staff across library types and sizes see the State Library as a critical partner in collaborative work and uniquely positioned to push the library community to be more collaborative as well as to help libraries be more present, visible, and valued in their communities.

Oregon library staff feel the opportunities for innovation and exploration in pilot projects and LSTA grant funding are valuable (“grants and pilot programs spark creativity”) and want to see those opportunities more broadly shared and open to more participants through a reduction in barriers.

Strengths of the State Library highlighted by members of the library community mostly focused on:

1. The value of the State Library staff;
2. The important and influential role the State Library plays in connecting libraries across geography, service population, library size, and library type;
3. The consistently high level of involvement and reliability.

The library community expects the State Library to continue to strengthen their offerings in the areas listed above, continuing to prioritize direct library expertise, personal connection to

the library community, and a high level of engagement in the library community in the State Library staff, working to bring libraries together across the state.

Opportunities for the State Library of Oregon in the next Five-Year LSTA Plan most clearly highlighted by members of the Oregon library community are:

- **Continue and deepen** the State Library's **high level of engagement and connection** with the library community;
- Continuing to connect libraries across geography, service population, library size, and library type, **investing in projects with impact across groups**;
- Actionable investment in **equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism** initiatives;
- Supporting libraries with the tools they need at the local/organizational level to **increase general awareness and visibility of libraries and library services**
- **Overcoming perceptions** around processes, particularly the competitive grant process, to increase participation.

In addition, there are opportunities that specifically address several IMLS Focal Areas and Intents:

- **Information Access**, particularly **digital equity** and supporting physical collections in schools;
- **Institutional Capacity: Improving Library Operations**, particularly in closely pairing training with standards or best practices and potentially expanding the reach of statistics;
- **Economic and Employment Development**, with a focus on youth workforce development;
- and **Human Services**, by supporting projects that include families in youth programming and outreach.

Each of these areas are explored in more detail in this report.

Building a Foundation for the 2023-27 LSTA Five-Year Plan: Starting with Strengths

As part of the evaluation process for the 2018-22 LSTA Five-Year Plan, members of the Oregon library community were asked to share their thoughts on areas of focus for the next plan. Participants were asked what successes the State Library of Oregon should carry forward, building a foundation for future work on the successes of the State Library. Comment was relatively consistent across groups, highlighting:

- The value of the State Library staff;
- The important and influential role the State Library plays in connecting libraries across geography, service population, library size, and library type.

Throughout, the State Library's consistent high level of involvement and reliability across initiatives was acknowledged and celebrated.

Value of State Library Staff

Again and again, State Library staff were mentioned as one of the greatest strengths of the organization's offerings. As phrased by an Eastern Oregon library leader, "the [State Library] staff connections with library staff" are viewed as an incredible strength, as is the State Library staff's "expertise and specialization," as the director of one large public library shared. Academic and public libraries particularly viewed it as incredibly valuable to have State Library staff with prior experience working in libraries.

"Staff support from the consultants is invaluable," shared one library director. Staff are "easy to reach out to," "amazing," "responsible," "knowledgeable," and "recogn[ize] the situations and resource needs of ... libraries." Each consultant was mentioned by name at some point throughout the focus groups. The State Library "staff is willing to try new things and support libraries that are doing the same." Members of the library community would like to see more consultants on staff, with more specific expertise, with the most requests focusing on a consultant to support equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism work throughout libraries in the state.

Connecting Libraries

Members of the Oregon library community appreciate the place the State Library occupies as a connector between library types, "providing opportunities for different library types to collaborate and connect on projects," as one academic library staff member shared, and for the ability of the organization to push out communication widely, even as participants highlight the challenge at the local level of ensuring that communication reaches beyond

the directors or library staff with high levels of awareness of the State Library. Directors at some of our largest public libraries expressed this as the "role [the State Library of Oregon plays] in convening conversations... bringing voices [together] across the state." A special library staff member commented on the role the State Library has in "highlighting our connections and similarities."

A community college librarian shared that the State Library should "continue to think about how connected our libraries are, leverage strengths, and cooperate across the state," with a colleague asking the State Library to "root the ethos of partnership" in libraries.

Statewide Programs: SDLP and OSLIS

The Statewide Database Licensing Program (SDLP) may be the strongest example of this cross-silo service for libraries in Oregon, particularly when combined with the services of the Oregon School Library Information System (OSLIS). When referring to the SDLP and OSLIS, community members appear to be speaking of the Gale suite of databases in particular, rather than Learning Express, which was not specifically mentioned. Statewide database access and the SDLP are the services members of the library community are most able to connect to LSTA funding, receiving more than double the mentions of the competitive grants program. This increases to 50% more mentions when OSLIS is included. One licensed school librarian summed it up best: the SDLP is the "great equalizer."

Praise for the SDLP fell into three areas:

- It "provides access to much needed resources ... that many small/rural libraries (amongst others) may not otherwise be able to offer access to"; "essential — otherwise unable to afford"
- Continuity between school and community colleges
- Allows libraries, particularly academic libraries, to focus their spending elsewhere.

The SDLP/OSLIS is also a great example of an appreciated and well-used program that library staff would like to "get even better." Licensed school librarians in particular requested "continued expansion of the databases and ebooks... updat[ing] the Gale databases... add[ing] new materials across all ages, not just encyclopedias [and] funding for digital audiobooks."

Two areas for growth with the databases are in service to schools whose library is staffed with classified school library staff, with the need to get training to those schools (classified school library staff, teachers, students) on the databases, and for access to a baseline of more rigorous or academic database resources to assist students with research.

Awareness Building and Demonstrating Value

The leadership role the State Library played during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been highlighted as an example of the kind of communication members of the library community would like to see more of from the State Library. An Eastern Oregon library

leader shared the strength of the State Library's "broad forward thinking — bigger picture ... small libraries have so much in the day-to-day."

Across library types, the strength of the State Library as an advocate was referenced. The State Library is "an advocate AND a resource," as one member of the Southern Oregon Library Federation (SOLF) highlighted, with another mentioning "the State Library is in our corner [with] their advocacy." In these instances, as throughout the focus groups in particular, members used "advocacy" as shorthand for activities that were about awareness building and demonstrating value: "continuing to build the good face of libraries [and the] importance of libraries," as one Eastern Oregon library leader shared. Directors at some of our largest public libraries noted the importance of the State Library "representing libraries at the state level."

One specific request of academic and community college library participants in awareness building is for the State Library to be more involved in "support for OER (Open Educational Resources)... OA (Open Access) and textbook affordability."

As one town hall participant shared, discussing the collaborative power of the State Library to build awareness, "some communities of librarian types (e.g. licensed school librarians; tech services staff) are seeing their number dwindling, their workloads increasing, and hence their ability to engage with the larger librarian community in Oregon and beyond significantly curtailed, through no fault of their own. As their numbers and ability to engage decrease, their voice(s) can be lost or minimized, again through no one's fault. The State Library of Oregon could help ensure these communities, who need our support more than ever, continue to have a voice and representation in discussions about needs, priorities, and funding opportunities." This is echoed by a State Library staff person: "more than ever, we need to support a library's capacity to partner."

State Library staff also value the relationships they are able to build with the library community and view the investment it takes to build and maintain these relationships as valuable. The personal connections and individual outreach play a large, yet undocumented, role in the success of programs. As one staff person said, the State Library should and can serve as the "warm hug" to welcome new members to the library community.

To Keep in Mind for the Next Five-Year Plan

The State Library should strive to keep a statewide perspective, capitalizing on its big-picture view and promoting equitable service among libraries. Members of the Oregon library community expect the state to be acting as a connector, bringing together good ideas across libraries and keeping a keen eye open for opportunities that would either benefit the widest possible range of libraries or which very specifically invest in areas of the greatest need.

Library staff see this type of activity as both beneficial and successful, as it provides resources to those who would otherwise not have access and frees up other libraries to refocus their resources. Participants in the engagement sessions recognize that some libraries and library types need additional focus and support — most notably, school libraries and libraries serving small, rural communities — and want to see the State Library invest more heavily in these areas.

Opportunities for the State Library of Oregon in the Next Five-Year Plan

As with the strengths of the State Library, members of the Oregon library community were strikingly in alignment regarding the opportunities for the State Library to explore in the next Five-Year LSTA Plan. These opportunities for focus and growth reflect areas where the State Library could make further investment, refine their current work, or continue to build on work already underway:

- Supporting Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism work in libraries;
- Rethinking and re-approaching communication with the library community to expand beyond library directors;
- Reviewing the LSTA granting process with equity at the forefront.

Supporting Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Work in Libraries

By far, the greatest opportunity for the State Library of Oregon is in supporting, advancing, and advocating for equity, diversity, inclusion and antiracism (EDIA) work in libraries.



EDIA-related suggestions from across focus groups; PDF included in the evaluation report appendices

Anti-Racism and EDIA

Library staff across library types, regions, and job classifications want to see strong and sustained action in this area from the State Library, including supporting the work of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) library staff already underway, such as the work of the Oregon Library Association's (OLA) Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Committee (EDIAC) and the EDIA Toolkit. The work of the State Library with the development of the toolkit is seen as a real strength to build on; "[former State Librarian] Jennifer [Patterson]'s leadership and humility," the "equal sense of urgency", and the true feeling of collaboration in this process were highlighted by OLA EDIAC members as part of why the project was such a success.

The need for support in EDIA was clear in the survey results as well, rising to the top across all library type groups. All groups are interested in better serving underserved populations, which were broadly self-reported as populations of color. School library staff (both licensed school librarians and classified school library staff) mentioned the need for support for low-income students, Latine students, and, broadly, their students of color, particularly in having up to date collections and in centering the library as a welcoming space. Public libraries also similarly reported in the survey the need for help in centering the library as a welcoming space, serving underserved populations, and reaching patrons outside the library. Public libraries report the need for assistance in supporting incarcerated populations, immigrant populations, migrant workers, low-income families, patrons experiencing houselessness, people with disabilities, and neurodiverse library users, particularly those in crisis. As with school library staff, public libraries placed the need for additional support in reaching out to Latine populations as a top priority.

Traditional library leadership, which presented as white in focus groups and town halls, also expressed the need for assistance in how to meaningfully address EDIA within the profession, recruiting and retaining BIPOC staff in positions throughout an organization.

Actions in EDIA need to be paired with clear outcomes; for example, as one academic library staff person shared, "have accountability [for libraries and grants] directly tied to EDIA/antiracist policies, practices and procedures," as well as increased professional development opportunities. Increased access to professional development should come with support to reduce barriers to attendance, such as funding substitute coverage or paying or reimbursing for the time to attend, and travel.

The library community expects (and needs) the State Library, in partnership with OLA and other groups, to lead with equity at a statewide level, and to model equity in their practices. As one State Library staff person mentioned, there needs to be "more social justice elements added into the State Library[']s work] — showing, encouraging, empowering..

libraries to examine how they can be better. [We need to] model the power of connection and partnership.”

Equity work must start with the State Library itself; for example, there is a strong sentiment that the next Five-Year Plan should center equity in all decision-making related to this funding. The development of a mission statement for grantmaking, for example, could be a powerful tool for ensuring equity is at the forefront of allocating funds.

Equity in Geographic Service Access

While the State Library has significantly invested in increasing access to library services for Oregonians, closing the gap remains of interest to the library community. Town hall participants shared the following sentiments:

- “It is quite unequal to have large areas in the state without library service;”
- “...Mobile services and access points beyond digital service are important, too;”
- “Looking at [Data and Digital Collections Consultant] Ross [Fuqua]’s map of library service in Oregon, it appears that there is about 20% or so of the state (mostly rural) that has no library service. How can the state support extending access to those areas?”

It should be noted the 20% referenced in the quote above refers to *geographic coverage*. The unserved population in Oregon, according to State Library references, is approximately 6%.

This represents an area where the State Library could build awareness amongst the library community, including making visible the significant barriers to reaching this last 6%.

Communication: Reaching Out Beyond Library Directors

Even as the State Library of Oregon maintains a large communication network, its reach is less than State Library staff and library directors may assume. This was particularly noted by participants in engagement sessions that were not in library management and by library staff of color, and was shared in particular by library staff of color engaged in state-level work, such as the following two points made by members of Oregon REFORMA or OLA EDIAC:

- Very little information about the State Library of Oregon and its programs makes its way to library staff
- Library staff do not know what the LSTA is about, or why it is important, or even why the State Library of Oregon is important.

This disconnection was echoed by staff at large libraries, notably from directors at large libraries sharing the challenge of highlighting the state resources outside of their youth services focused staff, as well as from academic library staff sharing the disconnection they

feel from the State Library when at a very large institution (such as the University of Oregon). Community college library directors also see the need for communication to easily be able to be shared with or make its way to adjunct faculty. As one OLA EDIAC committee member shared, "if we have these questions as leaders... imagine the questions others have!" This is the other side of the coin from the strength of the State Library staff: "you have to know someone to get anything done or who to go to... how can that change?"

It is important to note that the experience of knowing State Library staff and connecting with State Library staff, as reported in these focus groups, varies widely depending on position (director vs non-management staff) and those who do or do not see their race and ethnicity reflected in State Library staff.

Participants in the evaluation process had some examples of how communication could be increased, many of which are elaborated further below:

- A return to more in-person visits as it becomes safer to do so in a post-pandemic environment;
- More participation in regional and library consortium or cooperative meetings that do not feature only directors (such as Washington County Cooperative Library Services youth service or adult service meetings) or outside of public libraries (such as the Oregon Community College Library Association (OCCLA) and the Oregon Council of County Law Libraries (OCCLL)), while maintaining current attendance, such as with Southern Oregon Library Federation (SOLF) and the Libraries of Eastern Oregon (LEO);
- A more easily navigable State Library website.

Direct Connection with Library Support and Development Services Staff

Public (both small and large) and academic library staff mentioned the desire for the State Library to hold (or bring back, if they had been aware) "proactive outreach to directors/new leaders in libraries." Even a "welcome email from the state" was viewed as valuable. A special library director highlighted the "need to reach out to new directors at ALL kinds of libraries."

Library staff would like to see State Library staff both be located outside of Salem and make more visits outside of the Portland Metro and Willamette Valley areas. As members of the SOLF leadership shared, "regional hubs... [with] regional liaisons, [and] staff located in southern, central, and eastern Oregon" are not only visible markers of support, but also a demonstration of true investment in the rural and underserved areas of the state as highlighted in the LSTA Five-Year Plan. A town hall participant stated, "[it] adds legitimacy to have that level of backing from the state."

Leadership in some of the largest public libraries requested similar presence, emphasizing the need for the State Library to have “a vision for the WHOLE state... visiting and understanding the different regions... [the] State Library is an expert who can come,” as did leaders from some of our smallest libraries: “ensure at least one State Library rep at every [regional, library type, or collaborative group] meeting,” or “visit every library over the course of the [five-year] plan.” Increased “personal interactions with librarians in the field, especially in person” was highlighted as a potential measurement of success.

SOLF and large public library leadership want to see the State Library staff “have the expectation that they will participate regionally” in meetings of groups like SOLF and LEO. State Library staff could extend this to other collective groups including OCCLA and OCCLL. Library staff in locations outside of the Portland Metro and Willamette Valley areas mentioned they would like to see the State Library keep a strong commitment to virtual trainings and meetings after the COVID-19 pandemic, as it “is easier to participate statewide.” The investment in 2020 in increased virtual professional development options, including within Niche Academy and InfoPeople, is appreciated and welcomed.

Helping to Communicate Value

While the word “advocacy” was used frequently by focus group participants, as mentioned earlier in this report, the comments themselves point to the need for help in communicating the value of libraries, providing libraries (small and rural public libraries in particular) with the tools they need to better share the library story and raise awareness of library services (“more marketing on ALL libraries’ behalf,” as one community college librarian shared) in their own organizations and communities. Raising awareness and communicating value were strong and consistent currents through all engagement.

Communication about LSTA-funded work

Finally, when focused on LSTA-funded work, members of the library community expressed surprise at how difficult it was to find information on what grants were funded through the competitive grants program, for a variety of reasons:

- The State Library website is difficult to navigate;
- Lack of clarity about what funding supported projects;
- Lack of promotion by the State Library about what has been funded (“unless you are involved in the LSTA council, we don’t get to see what has been awarded”);
- Lack of communication by the State Library on what funded projects achieved, so other libraries could benefit (“how do we build on and not just duplicate projects?”).

For example, the State Library could “feature... [the grants they are] sponsoring” and more “snapshots, direct language, dashboards” that all library staff can access. LSTA Council members remarked on how this information is in the competitive grant applications, and perhaps the State Library should take a leadership role in promoting the “tangible benefits” of grant funded projects.

Reviewing the Granting Process with Equity in the Lead

Library staff have many questions about the granting process, and *perceptions* of the process, what gets funded, and who gets funded, create significant barriers. Across library types, library staff would like to see “separation] between the small grants and the big grants.”

In focus groups representing library staff of color, small and rural libraries, and with participants who were not library directors, the perceived challenges of the competitive grant process were remarkably similar:

- “there are some folks who are really good at writing a grant, and others are not”
- “a lot of the language in the application is not direct”
- “difficult if you only write a few grants” (or if you do not have experience writing grants)
- “hard to know what [LSTA plan] goal to fit into”
- the desire for a “more collaborative funding review process”
- “being able to ask questions/partially fund grants”
- “overwhelming as a small library to think about competing against Salem or Portland — what if there was an amount set aside just for small libraries!”
- “more quick and easy grant applications — and let us know about it!” (the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant process and the teen-focused mini grants were mentioned several times as examples)
- offer “training on specific grants,” like ALA did for the Libraries Transforming Communities grants for small and rural libraries
- we are “challenged by time/staffing/capacity to write grants.”

Library staff would also like to see greater flexibility in grant funds as related to staffing where possible. “We need to be able to hire staff to do the projects (and write the grants),” shared one community college library director. Directors representing libraries in Oregon’s most diverse cities would like to see “more of the underserved communities applying for and receiving LSTA grants,” specifically with “grants to BIPOC communities” and “small grants for [equity, diversity, and inclusion] activities (like Spanish books).”

Comments from library staff were echoed by the funders interviewed as part of the evaluation process. For example, comments by Nathan Schult, program officer for youth development and education with the Ford Family Foundation, were almost identical to concerns shared by library staff. For example, when asked about trends in granting the Ford Family Foundation is seeing, Schult mentioned their “worry about the eligibility criteria that leaves out small and rural libraries... and [that] larger libraries can hire a grant writer.” There is also concern about the “financial readiness and capacity” for libraries to apply for and administer grants, particularly those that need some level of matching funding or community partners.

Overall, members of the library community want to see more non-competitive funding distributed directly to libraries. Ideas included: increasing Ready to Read funding; funding for positions that are difficult to get locally, such as social workers; supporting different forms of outreach (bookmobiles, kiosks); funds for "taking a chance on a new service model"; and youth-focused workforce development, especially in career technical education (CTE) programs.

The LSTA Council has a significant number of ideas for making the LSTA competitive grants process more equitable, many of which are already in development or are on the path to implementation:

- "More support to encourage first time applicants: explicit framework for moving from idea to application."
- "continue to move away from evaluating for 'grant writing skills' rather than the grant project itself"
- "focus on the journey, what was learned and not necessarily that it was a success"
- "Assess if the reporting can be made simpler."
- "Assess whether the application can be shorter."
- "Continuing to revise application to make sure that questions are clear and limit barriers"
- "state library create grant application template for specific projects that increase equity"
- "support for the reporting portion"
- "More communication to historically marginalized communities about grant opportunities."
- "Provide applying libraries with a grant-writing mentor."
- "Continuing to revise criteria for assessing grants. Increase weight on serving underserved communities and project based in community need"
- "less competitive grants, more collaborative?"
- "Considering a model where some funds are directly allocated to specific libraries for specific kinds of projects (maybe similar to a ready to read model?)"

Even as significant changes have been made and the grant process simplified, more closely resembling the Ready to Read and ARPA grant processes praised by members of the library community, the perception of the process as time consuming and difficult remains. This can be seen in the comments from both members of the library community and LSTA Council members: "the red tape and bureaucracy for applying for grants is a barrier... but so is the red tape and bureaucracy that comes with reporting out about it. It often makes it not worthwhile to apply for the funds." An LSTA Council member shared this message to the State Library staff: "continue to work on making processes more accessible, working through red tape/bureaucracy whenever possible." "Red tape" comments tended to focus on the following items:

- The competitive grant application itself, including the language structure of the application questions and the LSTA plan goals;

- Lack of understanding about the role (or requirement) of matching funds;
- What (and how much) needs to be tracked and reported;
- Lack of understanding about how to fund staff through the grant process to assist with reporting activities.

State Library staff have been working to implement these kinds of changes for some time; from the sentiment of the library community and the congruence with the LSTA Advisory Council, the time is now to prioritize equity in grantmaking as well as in the plan as a whole.

To Keep in Mind for the Next Five-Year Plan

Equity must take a strong and clear lead in the next Five-Year Plan, and the State Library needs to take a broad approach, addressing multiple dimensions of diversity in their work. For example:

- The State Library should look inward, reviewing their own programs and processes through an equity lens. Not only must the State Library be more equitable and anti-racist, it must also ensure its major investments, professional development, and grant opportunities are specifically positioned to prioritize the needs of underserved and systemically marginalized groups.
- As one private funder shared, "Make sure that equity looks at geography, gender, and socioeconomics [as well] — these areas are really getting missed, especially when it comes to rural and tribal areas."
- A strong step in this direction is to work with the LSTA Council to rethink the Competitive Grants process. These grants are seen as invaluable opportunities for investment and innovation but are perceived with significant barriers to application, awarding, and implementation. However possible within Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) guidelines, the State Library should portion out or divide this funding into areas of focus, such as geographic area, size of library, and intended audience.
- When granting is not specifically supporting equity areas of focus, they should have broad and meaningful impact outside the granting organization, and preferably, across a large geographic area, if not the state.
- As expectations for collaborative projects increase, so too should the support in helping libraries put together successful projects and applications for these more complex undertakings.
- The State Library should apply processes and learning from other successful

granting programs, such as the Ready to Read funds and the ARPA grant process, to LSTA funding.

- The State Library should consistently and clearly communicate about their equity priorities and how they are being met by grant projects, and take the leadership role in communicating about the impact of grant-funded projects.
- The State Library should develop a plan to fund special and tribal libraries more equitably, soliciting grants from these under-represented and underfunded groups.
- A practical area where immediate help could be offered is how to handle increasing collection related challenges: library staff mentioned needing help re-interpreting or re-envisioning what intellectual freedom looks like through an equity and diversity lens.
- Overall, the State Library should be directing this LSTA funding towards projects that bring about systemic change.

The State Library should be clear and focused with their Five-Year Plan, investing specifically in areas or services with the most need but in a way that benefits the state as a whole. For example, rather than the State Library having an overall focus on workforce development, it could instead focus on workforce development for teens and young adults, an area where private funders are seeing significant interest and expenditure. While focusing on this specific area — youth workforce development— the State Library would fund opportunities and projects that are implemented across the state.

Another example would be to further investigate the results from the Oregon LSTA 2018-22 Evaluation survey and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE)-supported School Media Program Study survey of school staff and leadership, focusing very specifically on the neediest group of school libraries, providing direct funding to audit and update their collections to more authentically and accurately reflect Oregon's diversity. This could be done through a Ready to Read style grant process, with distributions sent directly to qualifying libraries, or direct purchase of core collections, prioritizing the physical collection, for schools across the state.

Another example would be to allocate funding on an annual basis to a specific area of investment. More research would need to be done on what areas of need stand out most strongly to the library community; the State Library could also pick an area of focus. A place to start might be in raising awareness of and assigning more funding to projects or pilot projects that already exist, or which echo trends in the competitive grant process. For example:

- Because several public libraries in small communities asked for help to improve their meeting room technology and offerings as part of the 2018-2022 LSTA competitive grant process, grant applications could be requested and prioritized for libraries needing these updates serving communities under 5,000.
- The State Library could expand funding for the Oregon Digital Newspaper Project (ODNP) and Northwest Digital Heritage, focusing on local digitization projects that make accessible the small-town newspapers and other resources and ephemera that highlight the otherwise untold stories of Oregonians of color.
- The State Library could pick one LSTA goal area per year of the plan to focus on, prioritizing grants that best support the goal or allow for broad impact in the goal area.

While this may mean a majority of the LSTA funds are essentially pre-allocated, the impact is much more significant and addresses aspects of socio-economic equity.

The State Library is beloved by library staff who understand its offerings and have connected with its staff. There is an incredible opportunity for the State Library to move beyond this most connected group and reach out to staff providing direct public service.

Building on this, and echoing the sentiment listed in the strengths section, the State Library should consider how to best position their staff as being part of statewide work and being perceived as present and visible outside of Salem and the Portland Metro. The Library Support and Development Services staff are well-respected, and members of the library community engaged in statewide work, such as through OLA and the LSTA Council, as well as at the director level, feel connected to those staff. This is especially true for staff in that division who have experience in libraries, particularly in district libraries and rural libraries.

Broader Plan Opportunities in the IMLS Grants to States Focal Areas and Intents

Throughout the evaluation engagement, members of the Oregon Library community highlighted needs, ideas for investment, and potential projects that closely align with several of the Grants to States Focal Areas and Intents. Unlike the strengths and opportunities mentioned previously, these areas may not have had as universal agreement, or the feedback was better suited for matching with the Focal Areas and Intents.

Information Access

Digital Equity.

Members of the library community offered up a significant number of suggestions related to digital equity. Suggestions fell into two areas:

- a desire to see the State Library be an active part in addressing statewide issues related to broadband access, “thinking the level above — think community, not library”; and,
- support for helping library users improve their technology skills.

Members of the library community are looking for a unified response in addressing broadband availability and access, and see this as an area where the State Library can play a leadership role, particularly in ensuring libraries are “at the table” for impactful broadband and digital equity conversations and projects.

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and ARPA projects across governmental jurisdictions, notably schools, have improved access to hardware, but public libraries in particular shared their challenges in helping patrons use the technology confidently and successfully. “Our communities are not all the same — there are different divides,” shared one member of SOLF leadership, “...age is a factor. Not [every patron] has the same comfort or practice or opportunity... projects [or resource] language comes with a west side/Portland perspective.” An example of work currently being supported in this area are the ARPA-funded digital navigator projects underway at the Multnomah County Library (one of the largest libraries in the state) and Fossil Public Library (one of the smallest).

Supporting Physical Collections in Schools.

A critical and specific activity that would support the equity work expected of the State Library would be an increased focus on school library collections. For a separate recent project, Constructive Disruption partnered with the State Library and ODE to analyze the results of a statewide survey focused on school library Media Program Standards, and results from [the final report](#), particularly combined with the survey results from the LSTA

Evaluation, paint a clear need for school collections to increase access to up-to-date, equitable, and inclusive collections. Academic and public library staff recognize their school library colleagues are in critical need, and that our youngest students in particular need access to significantly improved collections. While it may be seen as a traditional response, it would be difficult to overestimate the impact a State Library supported core collection could have on school library information access.

Institutional Capacity: Improve Library Operations

Standards — Paired With Training — For Libraries.

The Minimum Conditions for Public Libraries, when brought up by participants, are not seen as strong enough, and are easily confused with the Public Library Standards developed by OLA (which were also not seen as strong enough). Public library staff are clearly looking for guidance, particularly in communicating a base level of service or service expectation, and would like to see training match these expectations.

Library staff would like to see professional development from the State Library matched with standards, and focus on building professional development, particularly around the “philosophy of libraries.” The “philosophy of libraries has become politicized,” particularly in rural and conservative communities where community members comment (and, occasionally, staff comment) can be “you’re just pushing that EDI stuff,” as one Eastern Oregon library leader shared. Directors at large public libraries highlighted the need for increased trustee training, particularly on roles and responsibilities and intellectual freedom, as well as support for library staff in dealing with politicized election or appointment of new board members and how to gracefully handle “board members with agendas.”

Licensed school librarians similarly would like to see consistent access to baseline continuing education and wonder if the State Library has the “influence to offer a library certification program” — not a formal certification, but a state-specific informal program, similar to the American Library Association’s Library Support Staff Certification (LSSC). As increasingly more school libraries are staffed solely by classified library staff and, as one licensed school librarian said, “given [the] responsibility of the LMS [library media specialist] without training,” libraries are unable to provide the critical information literacy support students need.

Collecting Statistics.

The Public Library statistics are another area where coordination from the State Library is seen as valuable. One SOLF member shared, “the statistics are valuable but have gotten really complicated.” Members of SOLF wondered if there was a way for the State Library to provide a tool for capturing the data throughout the year, to reduce the burden on staff at reporting time, ensure the appropriate statistics are kept, and to support front-line library staff in accurately reporting data. Special libraries asked, “what if the State Library collected

info on other kinds of libraries like they do for publics?" Licensed school librarians would like to have more consistent and, critically, *easy* access to updated data, even as simple as budgetary and staffing data, for comparison. It is very difficult for schools to demonstrate whether they are in compliance with library requirements due to challenges in accessing data and the challenge in easily finding comparative peer libraries and school districts.

Economic and Employment Development

Youth Workforce Development.

As referenced earlier in this report, private funders see increased need for workforce development focused on teens and young adults.

Private funders highlight the need for libraries to "be at the table" for this discussion, working with local groups and schools to facilitate access for underrepresented youth; both mentioned traditional workforce development is mostly focused on adults and more traditional needs (resumes, for example) rather than helping communities navigate the workforce changes coming. This is an excellent example of an area where the State Library could teach libraries how to make effective partnerships with non-library organizations, and potentially provide tools and training to library staff so they would feel confident in their participation and/or come to that "table" as an equal/important partner.

Library staff also see opportunities for state-supported internship programs, especially in support of diversifying library staff (similar to the aims of the Public Library Association's Inclusive Internship Initiative).

Human Services

Including Families in Youth Programming and Outreach.

Private funders see the need to incorporate more support for family participation and engagement in programs for youth, particularly in programs that serve underserved and systemically marginalized groups. There is great opportunity for the State Library to adopt or prioritize a more holistic approach in its programs for youth, building on that strong foundation.

Notes on Reporting for the Future

As the State Library begins to develop its next Five-Year Plan, there is a great opportunity to include the development of measurements of impact and success with the development of plan goals and focus areas. This would allow for more meaningful and continuous evaluation throughout the life of the plan, as well as the ability to dive deeper in the plan's evaluation. When developing the next plan, the State Library should ensure it is considering what data it wants to collect from the beginning, matching the end goal, whether that be statistical or stories of impact, with the data to be collected. These recommendations could then, perhaps, be built into the LSTA competitive grant application and process, which would ensure the State Library gathers data in aggregate while relieving some of the "red tape" mentioned earlier, as, in some cases libraries wouldn't have to come up with their own measurements for their projects.

While the library community did not express that they feel the State Library focuses on one library type more or to the exclusion of others, there is an opportunity for the State Library to more deliberately be able to report out on their engagement to the library community with different library types. This is true for different geographic areas of the state as well. This data collection for impact by library type and/or region will be critical in supporting the distribution of resources for equity and inclusion.

In addition, small changes in data entry with the annual State Program Report (SPR) submitted to the IMLS would make painting a picture of impact clearer. For example:

- When the grants are entered in SPR, be sure the State Library staff are consistently linking them to the associated goal and the intent, especially if there are multiple staff members entering projects, or staff changes shift this responsibility from one person to another. This may be particularly important as the State Library turns towards more funding of EDIA related projects.
- Strive for more consistency in where projects are classified or categorized.
- Build expectations and definitions of achievement into the plan itself, potentially including:
 - Pre- and post-tests for staff development
 - Articulating measurable objectives for each year's project phase, tying the objectives and phases to plan goals

With the plan, plan data, and evaluation, the State Library has three tools to demonstrate its focus and impact that are currently underutilized. With the next Five-Year Plan, consider developing it to use it as a tool to communicate and demonstrate the State Library's value, making clear where Oregon libraries need to step in. Modeling equity and inclusion as well as measuring for impact and outcome in the Five-Year Plan allows the plan to be a model for local communities to frame their own work.

In Conclusion

Throughout the engagement for the State Library of Oregon's 2018-2022 LSTA Five-Year Plan evaluation, feedback on the strengths, opportunities, and potential future paths and projects from the Oregon library community was remarkably consistent.

Over the next five years, the Oregon library community highlighted five opportunities that exist for the State Library of Oregon:

- **Continue and deepen** the State Library's **high level of engagement and connection** with the library community;
- Continuing to connect libraries across geography, service population, library size, and library type, **investing in projects with impact across groups**;
- Actionable investment in **equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism** initiatives;
- Supporting libraries with the tools they need at the local/organizational level to **increase general awareness and visibility of libraries and library services**
- **Overcoming perceptions** around processes, particularly the competitive grant process, to increase participation.

The staff of the State Library are incredibly well-respected and valued for their expertise, consistency, and reliability. Members of the Oregon library community spoke time and time again about the confidence they have in reaching out to the State Library and the quality of the help, advice, or resources they will receive. At the same time, these connections tend to be strongest with library directors or upper management, with the exception of school library staff; there is great opportunity for the State Library to find ways to deepen their impact with front line or direct service library staff.

The State Library is viewed as a key leader in advocating for and supporting projects with impact across regions of the state, across community or organization size, and across library types. Library staff in engagement described the importance of the "library ecosystem," in projects that encourage collaboration, breaking out of library type silos, and learning from each other.

The greatest expressed need for the next Five-Year Plan was in the area of equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism (EDIA) work. Members of the library community need and expect the State Library to take a leadership role in these areas, reviewing their own policies, programs, and procedures, including the granting process; supporting projects and initiatives in these areas; providing resources, including training, and, notably a consultant, for libraries to access; and focusing on libraries with the greatest need or in communities with the greatest need.

Comments around the grantmaking process bring together these last two opportunities: increasing communication with and between libraries and EDIA. For example, at every step of the grantmaking process, there are perceptions that keep libraries from participating; these perceptions even persist, in many cases, within the LSTA Advisory Council, charged with distributing the competitive grant funds. The State Library should both address these perceptions and make any necessary shifts to best support EDIA initiatives.

Finally, throughout, members of the Oregon library community would like to see the State Library help them more effectively tell their story. Ideas might include toolkits that can be repurposed locally; focused grantmaking, and tools to promote grant projects; or investment in programs that have statewide impact.



About Constructive Disruption

Constructive Disruption (<http://www.constructivedisruption.info>) is a woman-owned consultancy based in Oregon focusing on strategy work for local government and libraries. Our planning processes are built with a collaborative, future-focused mindset at the heart; our strengths-based, human-centered approach sets our consultancy work apart.

Our consultancy functions as a cooperative, bringing together expertise tailored to our projects. Our team members are located across the United States; we pool our knowledge and experience in the belief that collaborators with different viewpoints create superior end products. For the State Library of Oregon LSTA 2018-2022 Evaluation, our team included:

- **Stephanie Chase** (she/her). Stephanie has more than 20 years of experience in public libraries on both the east and west coasts, having served as a library director or in executive leadership in small and rural public libraries as well as at Multnomah County (OR) Library, The Seattle Public Library, and the Hillsboro (OR) Public Library. Stephanie is the Founding Principal of Constructive Disruption and currently the Executive Director of the Libraries of Eastern Oregon, a 15-county resource sharing cooperative, and serves on the Public Library Association's Board of Directors.
- **Judah Hamer** (he/his). Judah Hamer has deep experience in public and school libraries, with a career spanning over three decades. His areas of expertise are organizational development, knowledge management, and interactional analysis. In addition to more than 30 years in library service, Judah has taught extensively at the School of Communication & Information, Rutgers University (NJ) and is currently Vice President, Operations and Human Resources at Bandujo Advertising + Design, New York City.

We believe in working together to break down barriers to progress.

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Prepared in March 2022 by Constructive Disruption
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