



LIBRARY SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY ACT OUTCOME EVALUATION PLAN

**Developed by
SADLON & ASSOCIATES, INC.**

**For the
STATE LIBRARY OF FLORIDA**

**THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Katherine Harris, Secretary of State**

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Purpose

This plan describes an outcome evaluation approach being developed and implemented by the Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services (“Division”) to be used with projects that receive federal funds through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). This document outlines how this outcome evaluation approach fits into the organizational structure and work of the Division.

The audience for this plan includes Division staff, members of the LSTA Advisory Council, local libraries and citizen supporters, members of the State Library Council, and staff of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), provider of LSTA funds. The document includes background, context, and rationale, as well as organizational and implementation plans. Reviewers of this document are invited to share input toward its improvement and are encouraged to become active participants in the implementation of this exciting and important *Outcome Evaluation Plan*.

Overview

On September 30, 1996, the Library Services and Technology Act was passed by Congress. LSTA embodies a fresh approach to federal support for libraries. Each state is free to shape its LSTA program to meet the unique needs of its own citizens within the broad purposes of LSTA. In Florida, the statewide plan for library development and for the expenditure of LSTA funds is embodied in *Access for All: Libraries in Florida's Future; A Plan for the Continued Development of Florida's Libraries*. Published in July 1997, this document addresses the ideas and concerns expressed by the hundreds of people who participated in the statewide long-range planning process. The goals, strategic directions, objectives, and strategies in *Access for All* form the basis for the LSTA grant program administered each year by the State Library of Florida.

Federally-funded library projects have been making a difference in Florida communities since 1956. In the current era of increased accountability and scarce resources, the IMLS encourages State Library Agencies to demonstrate this difference by measuring the *impact* that statewide and local LSTA projects have on the people they serve.

United Way of America has developed a clear, powerful model for measuring impact, or *outcomes*, as they are called.

In 1998, IMLS staff sought participation of State Library Agencies in a pilot project that would test the feasibility of applying an outcomes measurement approach to the evaluation of projects funded under LSTA. State Library Agencies were invited to submit applications to IMLS and Florida was one of five states (including Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Washington) selected to pilot the approach.

Outcomes in the Context of Planning and Evaluation

Outcomes are a powerful tool for planning and improving projects. To reduce redundancy, avoid unnecessary added work, and maximize effectiveness, outcome measurement should be integrated into existing planning and evaluation approaches. This LSTA Outcome Evaluation Plan will be integrated with two key planning documents: *Access for All: Libraries in Florida's Future; A Plan for the Continued Development of Florida's Libraries* and *Planning for Results: A Public Library Transformation Process*.

Statewide Planning: Access for All

Access for All: Libraries in Florida's Future; A Plan for the Continued Development of Florida's Libraries, is the Division's statewide long-range plan for library development. It identifies specific activities conducted by the Division to support the establishment, expansion, and improvement of public library service within the context of the larger library community. It also includes services to other types of libraries as they relate to interlibrary cooperation, resource sharing, and networking.

The goals and objectives in *Access for All* are reviewed annually and progress is reported at the state and federal levels. At the state level, some of the long-range plan's objectives are folded into the Division's Performance-Based Program Budget. At the federal level, the Division reports annually to IMLS on progress made toward achievement of the long-range plan's objectives.

The Division's evaluation strategies have primarily focused on inputs (*resources dedicated to or consumed by the program*, such as money, facilities, staff, etc.) and outputs (*direct products of program activities*, such as number of participants in programs and number of items

circulated), rather than outcomes – the *changes in people's lives* that occur because of library services. The Division has taken a first step in this direction by identifying outcomes of the statewide Born to Read Program and contracting with Florida State University's Family Institute to conduct a longitudinal study of teen parents and their children who participate in the Born to Read Program at their local public library. The LSTA Outcome Evaluation Plan embodied in this document is the next step for the Division.

Local Library Planning: *Planning for Results*

Another factor related to public library planning and evaluation in Florida is the common use of the new planning model, *Planning for Results: A Public Library Transformation Process*, and its predecessor, *Planning & Role Setting for Public Libraries*. The *Planning for Results* guidebook and how-to manual were published by the Public Library Association, a Division of the American Library Association, in 1998. *Planning for Results* uses output measures to evaluate the success of projects and services in meeting goals.

Outcome measures are compatible with *Planning for Results*, in which libraries identify their missions, goals, objectives, and activities. Outcome measurement goes beyond this basic planning model to focus on the *changes in people's lives* that result from their participation in library projects. Although the two approaches do not always use common planning vocabulary, terms are compatible. The LSTA Outcome Evaluation Plan integrates these approaches to create a seamless system for libraries to plan and measure impact.

Vision for Outcome Measurement

Beginning in 2001, Florida libraries will be required to use outcome measurement to demonstrate the impact of their LSTA-funded projects. Division staff will incorporate outcome measurement as one criterion for evaluating grant applications. Division staff will use outcome results to identify areas for technical assistance and support to libraries in an ongoing effort to improve funded projects and maximize the impact of LSTA funds.

The Division is committed to assisting libraries as they begin outcome measurement. During a transition period from 1999 to 2001, staff of the Division's Bureau of Library Development will assist librarians through

training and technical assistance to effectively integrate outcomes measurement into LSTA project evaluation.

Benefits for Libraries

The implementation of the Outcome Evaluation Plan requires a long-term partnership between the Division and grant recipients. Staff will provide ongoing training and technical assistance to libraries throughout the two-year development period. Outcome measurement will be phased in during FY 1999 and 2000. Beginning with grants due in spring 2001 for projects beginning October 1, 2001, outcome measurement will be required and grant applications will be reviewed and evaluated with this criterion in mind. Staff will continue to work with and support libraries and project staff as they continue to gain experience in outcome measurement.

Through outcome measurement, grant recipients will be able to demonstrate the impact of their projects and improve their services. Libraries will have an opportunity to learn how well they are doing and what factors contribute to their success. Libraries can use the information they obtain to adapt and improve projects and increase their effectiveness.

In addition, libraries will be able to use results of outcome measurement to demonstrate to other (non-LSTA) funding sources and potential funding sources the impact of their projects. Increasingly, major funding sources are looking for impact, and outcomes are understood by donors at all levels.

Overall, the ability to demonstrate a project's effectiveness can help a library in many ways, including:

- As a powerful planning tool
- As a communication tool (to effectively report benefits to the community)
- As a tool for reporting to local government or other funders (to ensure accountability and to justify funding needs)
- As a tool for building partnerships and promoting community collaborations
- As a tool for recognizing exemplary service
- As a valid means of targeting services for expansion or replication

United Way of America's Outcome Measurement Model

In 1996, United Way of America published *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach*. This manual and its accompanying materials offer a simple, useful, and meaningful approach to measuring the impact of health and human service programs. This approach was developed by United Way of America, public agencies and leading national non-profit organizations. In the years since, this model has been applied throughout United Way systems across the United States; training has been shared with leading non-profit organizations as well as public agencies, creating a common language.

The United Way approach guides planners to summarize their project on one page, succinctly identifying the following key components:

- *Inputs* are the resources used by a project, such as money and staff.
- *Activities* are the services provided, such as tutoring – the “verbs.”
- *Outputs* are the traditional “counts” of project activities, such as the number of people who participated or the number of items circulated.
- *Outcomes* take measurement one step further to ask, “What difference did it make?” by looking at the *changes in people's lives* that resulted from the project. Outcomes measure changes in participants' knowledge, skills, behavior, or condition.

Project staff then choose the outcomes they will measure to demonstrate effectiveness. Outcomes are designed to streamline and work with existing data collection methods and provide management with real-time data to use in planning, decision-making, and project improvement. Outcome results are useful to both project staff and funders.

Scope of Outcome Measurement

Florida libraries apply for LSTA funding each year, whether for support of a new or continuing project. Funding categories may change from year to year, reflecting current priorities. A total of 84 LSTA projects were funded for FY 1998-1999.

All applicants will be required to incorporate outcome measurement in their FY 2001-2002 LSTA applications.

Implementation

The Division recognizes the considerable changes that will be required of some libraries as they incorporate outcome measurement.

Implementation of the Outcome Evaluation Plan includes ongoing training and technical assistance in a variety of formats to support libraries through this learning process.

LSTA applicants were invited to begin the transition in the FY 1999-2000 funding year, when they were encouraged to include outcome measurement in their grant applications. The Division will offer training beginning in fall 1999, and libraries will be able to access ongoing technical assistance from staff of the Bureau of Library Development.

Outcomes Training Opportunities Before Required Implementation

LSTA Advisory Council Meetings	July 1999, June 2000
Train the Trainer Workshops	October 1999
Data Coordinators Meetings	September 1999, 2000
Library Directors Conferences	October 1999, 2000
Born to Read Capacity Building Workshop	November 1999
Grant Writing Workshops	January 2000, 2001
Friends & Trustees Workshops	February 2000, 2001

Four key groups will work together on implementing outcome measurement: a team of contract consultants, Division staff in the Bureau of Library Development, the LSTA Advisory Council, and libraries with LSTA funding. Each group plays a critical part in the success of this plan, as outlined below.

Role of Contract Consultants

The team of consultants offers experience in outcome measurement, specifically the United Way of America model, as well as in library planning and services. Their work products will include:

- This Outcome Evaluation Plan which summarizes how outcomes fit within the structure and work of the Division
- A training program including a “train the trainer” session for Division staff and local library trainers and a stand-alone manual that guides libraries in identifying and measuring outcomes

- An exemplary projects program that recognizes “star quality” projects, as determined through outcome measurement, and communicates information about these excellent projects statewide

The consultants will work closely with Division staff and the LSTA Advisory Council to design an effective program, incorporate lessons from other outcome efforts, and respond to identified needs of libraries.

Role of Division Staff

Staff of the Division’s Bureau of Library Development are responsible for organizational implementation of the plan as well as ongoing training and technical assistance.

Organizational implementation

- Build and maintain commitment among grant recipients
- Communicate rationale for outcome measurement
- Clarify expectations among grant recipients
- Regularly communicate with key stakeholders, including grant recipients and LSTA Advisory Council
- Be alert for resistance and fears; work together to recognize patterns of resistance and develop consistent responses
- Incorporate outcomes measurement in grant rules
- Assist grant recipients to successfully implement outcome-based evaluation

Training and technical assistance

- Participate in the train-the-trainer workshop conducted by the contract consultants in fall 1999
- Integrate information about outcome measurement in all communications with libraries and other stakeholders, as appropriate
- Work with libraries and project staff to develop outcome measures for LSTA-funded projects
- Provide ongoing feedback and technical assistance to libraries as they develop outcome measures
- Continue to update skills in outcome measurement and train new Division staff

A note about resistance: Any change as significant as outcome measurement generates concerns that can lead to resistance. Division staff will acknowledge and address these concerns up front, will work to develop buy-in, and will continue to respond with support and training. Staff are dedicated to assisting and supporting libraries. Through ongoing communication and site visits to LSTA-funded projects across the state, staff will address concerns, support learning and improvement, and demonstrate the benefits of outcome measurement for libraries.

Role of LSTA Advisory Council

Rather than create an additional advisory group to provide leadership and support for the Outcome Evaluation Plan, the current LSTA Advisory Council will incorporate outcomes into their existing evaluation responsibilities. All Council members will have basic knowledge of the plan and an ability to communicate effectively about what outcome measurement is and why the Division is incorporating this evaluation component in the LSTA grant program. Ideally, at least one member of the Advisory Council will participate in the train-the-trainer session set for the fall 1999.

In its advisory, policy-level role, the Advisory Council will receive periodic communication from the staff about the progress of plan implementation. A portion of the agenda for each annual meeting of the Council will be dedicated to outcomes. Feedback from the Advisory Council will reflect the diverse perspectives of its membership and significantly increase the quality of the effort.

Role of libraries

With outcome measurement as a required component for LSTA-funded library projects by FY 2001-2002, all grant recipients will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate staff are trained and supported in their development of outcome measures. Libraries will have opportunities to receive training and technical support through a variety of venues as described above. In addition, the manual designed by the contract consultants will serve as a step-by-step, hands-on workbook for library staff to use in developing outcome measures for projects.

Grant recipients will identify staff who are responsible for measuring and reporting outcomes for each project. Depending on the library and the project, different staff may be involved. Initial training and development

time will be an added responsibility for those staff. Later, analysis and reporting of results will require dedicated staff time. Initially, outcomes can be measured using data that are already being collected; however, additional data may be required and information management systems may be necessary to assist with analysis and reporting.