



**INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EVALUATION FOR
IMPROVED PUBLIC LIBRARY DECISION MAKING AND ADVOCACY
FINAL REPORT**

Grant No. LG-06-05-0140-05

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PROJECT TITLE

2. Project title

Increasing the Effectiveness of Evaluation for Improved Public Library Decision-Making and Advocacy (Grant No. LG-06-05-0140-05)

PROJECT PARTNERS

3. Partners, if applicable

The project has four partners, the Baltimore County Public Library (BCPL), the Omaha Public Library (OPL), the MidYork Library System (MLS), and the American Library Association's (ALA) Office for Research. The library partners represent a diverse library community along a number of demographics, including library size, service community, geographic region, and evaluation needs. All, however, have substantial experience and interest in evaluation efforts and provide an important practitioner-based perspective for the project in general and development of the project web site in particular.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

4. Provide a very brief overview describing goal of the project, the project design and to what extent the goal was achieved. This may be used as a project abstract or summary for public information. (150 words or less).

The project's overall goal is to develop a centralized, public-access, web-based Evaluation Decision-Making System (EDMS) to help public librarians and managers match data collection needs with *best-fit* evaluation approaches for management purposes and to demonstrate public library value to communities served. Information provided through the EDMS web site meets the goal and objectives of the project and includes:

- Types of evaluation methods typically used to assess the use of services and resources;
- Data each type of evaluation can provide;
- How to plan for data collection efforts and tips on how to analyze the data; and
- Strategies on how to apply the results of evaluation efforts for management and advocacy purposes.

Evaluation modules provide an overview of available evaluation methods, guidance on the application of the evaluation methods, and links to evaluation resources on how to conduct library-related evaluations. The EDMS web site is available at <http://www.libevaluation.com/edms/>.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

5. Describe the project activities (and quantify them using Part 2 of this form).

The study team originally developed tasks and a timeline for the current project. An overview of project activities includes:

1. Project preparation; assemble project team; develop Advisory Committee; and project planning.

The project team engaged in comprehensive project planning with the project partners, formed the advisory committee, hired staff, and tasked out key project activities for the duration of the project.

2. Identify and assess evaluation approaches and practices.

The study team conducted a literature review of common public library evaluation practices and identified best practice evaluation activities by evaluation approach, i.e. balanced scorecard, outcomes assessment, service quality, and estimating value of library services and resources. The study team also conducted interviews and focus groups with a total of 84 library managers in 19 libraries and five state library agencies (Texas, Iowa, New Jersey, Oregon and Florida) beginning January 20 and ending April 13, 2006 conducted interviews and surveys with project partners (4) and the Advisory Committee (7); and conducted an assessment of 28 LSTA grant final reports collected from five state library web sites. These data collection activities identified local, state, and national level evaluation needs of local library managers, state library librarians and data coordinators, national library associations such as ALA, and federal grant providers such as IMLS and the LSTA program.

3. Map and plan the contents of the EDMS; develop a beta EDMS site; and field test the EDMS beta site with project partners and others.

The project team and partners engaged in evaluation module development, EDMS web site design, and EDMS usability, accessibility, and functionality testing. The EDMS was modified based on the results of 13 surveys (i.e. with project partners and Advisory Committee members) and annual meetings with project partners and Advisory Committee members on the use and usefulness of EDMS modules. The surveys and meetings were integral to the development and modification of EDMS modules.

4. Refine the EDMS based on field test results.

Based on the results of the EDMS usability, accessibility, and functionality testing, the project team refined and made changes to the EDMS web site and content. The project team, project partners, and Advisory Committee then conducted a second round of usability, accessibility, and functionality testing. The project team added features and edited the content and format of the web site based on the second round of assessments.

5. Instruction and tutorials; dissemination of results; and project evaluation.

The project team conducted five training sessions from April 2009 through May 2009 in four states Texas (1), Florida (2), New York (1) and Oregon (1) introducing the EDMS web site and collected data from 73 library managers trained at the end of the project on the use and usefulness of the EDMS web site as part of the project's outcomes assessment process of the EDMS.

PROJECT AUDIENCE

6. Describe the project audience(s) (and quantify them using Part 2 of this form).

The EDMS is primarily designed for public librarians and library managers who conduct evaluation or oversee library staff members who conduct evaluations, i.e. library practitioners. The intent of the EDMS is to help public librarians and managers select and apply evaluation approaches that best fit unique library situations (i.e. library situational factors), use these evaluations to better demonstrate the value of library programs and services to the community they serve, and to better advocate for the library to funders. In addition, the EDMS is useful for state library librarians and data coordinators, ALA staff members, academic researchers, library school students, and others interested in evaluation activities and utilizing national library survey data for determining value of library services and resources, and the use of aggregated data for planning and advocacy purposes.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

7. Analyze your project. Use quantitative data as well as qualitative examples, highlights from your evaluation and compelling anecdotes.

Overview of the Project

The overall purpose of this project is to provide a product (EDMS) that will help public librarians and managers match data collection needs with best evaluation approaches to demonstrate public library value to communities served. The EDMS consists of instructional modules, interactive modules, commons area with additional references and resources, a section about the project and the study team, and a section with contact information.

Instructional Modules

Instructional modules provide evaluation-based information to practitioners, researchers, students, and others on planning evaluations, developing data collection instruments, analysis of data collected, and reporting of findings. Instructional module sections include:

1. Introduction to evaluation modules that provide basic information and strategies for those about to conduct an evaluation of library services.

2. Evaluation method modules that present an overview of selected evaluation methods libraries can use to assess services and resources, as well as some issues associated with using these methods.
3. Data collection and analysis modules that provide information on how to plan and prepare for data collection, and selected data analysis tools and approaches for use during evaluation efforts.

The instructional modules present overviews of most commonly used evaluation techniques and approaches based on the study team's prior research in these areas and the initial data collection efforts conducted by the study team for this project (i.e. literature review, interviews, focus groups, and surveys).

Interactive Modules

Interactive modules draw from selected local library produced data accessed from national public library survey databases such as the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) and *Public Libraries and the Internet* surveys conducted by the Information Institute (i.e. the current study team). Interactive module sections include:

1. Library profiles that enable users to create profiles of their local libraries based on national surveys and provide local level statistics for comparison to state and national level averages. At present, the EDMS system provides data from the *2004 NCES Database*, *2005 NCES Database*, and Information Institute's *2006 National Public Library Internet Survey Database* funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. These databases provide data needed to implement on-the-fly reports generated from existing databases. Future plans for the EDMS include the inclusion of additional national library survey databases.
2. Library evaluation tools enable users to determine the value of library services and identify unique aspects of local library conditions for evaluation, decision-making, reporting, and advocacy purposes. At present, the tools section consists of a library value calculator that provides users with the option to select specific library services and calculate the value of those services. The calculator allows participants to change the default values per unit of service to reflect current individual library situational factors and as a tool to project future value based on changes to a library's services and resources.
3. Library report modules provide access to local, state, and national level databases for planning and decision-making in critical areas of interest specific to a local library's reporting and advocacy needs. Library report modules include the *Tell the Story* modules and a *State Library Statistical Module*. Descriptions of these modules include:
 - a. The *Tell the Story* module provides basic information in a report format regarding local public library demographics, library use statistics (i.e. NCES), and the provision

of public access computing and Internet connectivity for comparison to state and national averages of connectivity. The *Tell the Story* module also includes sections regarding management, budget planning, and advocacy strategies related to public access computing services. The *Tell the Story* module integrates NCES and 2006 *National Public Library Internet Survey* data into a report format with data represented in graphic format for comparison of local library data to state and national averages.

- b. The *State Library Statistical Module* is specifically created for use by state libraries. The report generated by the module graphically presents national and state level data from the NCES database for comparison across states and to national averages.

The selected databases used by the EDMS provide a proof of concept approach to integrating data from multiple national library databases into reports. Integration of national level data from multiple databases generates reports for public library practitioners and others to use in determining the value of a library's services and resources and for advocacy purposes.

Commons

The *Commons* area provides access for EDMS users to a communication center, instructional and interactive module resources, and selected references and links to additional evaluation related information. *Commons* areas include:

1. The *Online Communication Center* is a venue for interactive communication among EDMS users, evaluation experts, and the EDMS team. The communication center includes a threaded discussion list index and an *Ask an Expert* interactive template. EDMS participants can use the *Ask an Expert* template to send questions and comments to evaluation experts about evaluation in general or about a specific evaluation approach.
2. The *Module Resources Commons* is a database of selected resources for each selected evaluation approach of the EDMS. Resources include examples of evaluation sites so EDMS users have access to additional information related to evaluation activities for planning, conducting, and reporting purposes. The resource commons also includes an interactive *Suggest a Resource* template so users can help others by identifying useful and relevant resources the study team can add to the site.
3. The *References and Links* area contains hyperlinks to full-text articles and citations of journals and books. The references and links are organized and presented by evaluation approach as presented in the instructional module section of the site.

The EDMS *Commons* also provides access to evaluation experts, a discussion board, and useful electronic and print resources by evaluation topic.

About Us

The *About Us* section provides background and other useful information about the EDMS project, the Information Institute, and the funding agency (IMLS). In addition, the about us section includes an acknowledgement section with lists of the principal investigators, project partners, advisory committee members, and other individuals who contributed to the overall development of the EDMS.

Contact Us

The *Contact Us* section provides useful contact information for EDMS users to ask questions or post comments using an interactive contact form. In addition, the contact us section provides email and mail contact information for the principal researcher of the project and the Information Institute.

Interactive Contact Forms

In addition to the other interactive features of the site, the EDMS contains four interactive contact forms that create a seamless communication process between EDMS visitors and the study team. The interactive forms have embedded text fields for data entry by EDMS users and include associated, pre-loaded EDMS specific email accounts. Users simply enter data into the text fields and hit send. The interactive forms reduce the need for visitors to create or format email accounts or to enter email addresses to contact the study team. Interactive forms include *Feedback*, *Contact Us*, *Ask an Expert*, and *Suggest a Resource*.

Overview of the Project Summary

The EDMS provides assistance and continuing education for those seeking to use evaluation in their library. The EDMS site provides interactive services that include development of reports from state and national library statistics supplied by selected national public library databases and instructional services on how to: develop an evaluation and data collection plan, conduct evaluations, generate reports, and use and share findings.

The EDMS enables users of the system to identify which evaluation methods provide the most useful information needed to meet their local library needs by type of information required. Ultimately, the EDMS will help public librarians and managers select and apply the evaluation approach that fits the unique situational factors related to their library and best demonstrates the value of a library's programs and services to the community it serves. In addition, the EDMS allows users to access local library data collected through national library surveys to produce customizable reports for comparison of local library statistics to state and national averages of the same statistics for valuation and advocacy of a library's services and resources to the community they serve and to state and national funding agencies.

Project Goals

a. Compare the actual accomplishments of the project with the project's established goals and objectives.

The overall purpose of this project is to provide a product (EDMS) that will help public librarians and managers match data collection needs with *best-fit* evaluation approaches to demonstrate public library value to communities served. The following goals guide this process. Public librarians and managers will be able to:

- Goal 1: Capture evaluation information regarding library services and programs that best meets user, community, and public librarian/manager information needs.
- Goal 2: Select and use appropriate, efficient, and effective evaluation approaches in order to undertake informative evaluation activities.
- Goal 3: Understand uses, impacts/benefits, value, and other aspects of library services and programs to library community and funders.
- Goal 4: Better advocate locally the benefits, impacts, and value of library services and programs to the public library community and funders.

Additionally, meeting these goals will improve library services to better meet patron needs and will provide practical methods and mechanisms for providing evaluation results to local, state, and federal funding agencies.

Comparison of Project Accomplishments to Project Goals

Goal 1: Capture evaluation information regarding library services and programs that best meets user, community, and public librarian/manager information needs.

The study team has prior research experience in matching *best-fit* evaluation approaches to a local library's data needs based on a library's unique situational factors. The study team identified initial evaluation approaches that allow local librarians, library managers, and others to capture data specific to their library. This process was based on the study team's prior experience in this area, an in-depth literature review of available evaluation approaches commonly used in library settings, and survey feedback from the project's partners, Advisory Committee members, and public librarians and library managers. Data collected from this process provides libraries the capability to determine the value of services and resources they provide to the communities they serve and to advocate for additional funding or maintaining funding based on calculated value of services and resources provided to their local library community.

Under *Instructional Modules*, the introduction-to-evaluation modules describe different types of information needs, the importance of matching data collection efforts to information needs, and the types of evaluation approaches capable of producing the needed information. The data collection and analysis modules (see *Instructional Modules*) describe how to collect and analyze data needed to evaluate library services, resources, and programs.

Under *Interactive Modules*, the study team developed *Library Profile* modules that capture local library specific data from multiple national library surveys and present the data from the surveys as library profile reports. These library profile reports allow libraries to compare local library data capable of describing and valuing a library's services and resources. The profile reports also allow a local library to compare its services and resources to state and national averages of the same services and resources for advocacy purposes. In addition, library evaluation tools (i.e. the *Library Value Calculator*) and library report modules (i.e. the *Tell the Story* module) allow libraries to enter local level quantitative, qualitative, and anecdotal data into fields of interactive forms. These interactive forms capture local level library data for comparison to state and national level data and describe the affects of locally provided library services and resources to the community the library serves and library funders.

Modules from the instructional and interactive areas of the EDMS allow librarians, library managers, researchers, state librarians, and others to capture evaluation data at the local library level for determining the value of a library's services and resources and for advocacy purposes. These modules meet goal one.

Goal 2: Select and use appropriate, efficient, and effective evaluation approaches in order to undertake informative evaluation activities.

The *Introduction to Evaluation* section of the *Instructional Modules* introduces librarians and library managers to basic information and strategies for conducting evaluation of library services, resources, and programs. The instructional modules also include discussions of the type of data each evaluation approach produces and the best use of the data. In addition, the data collection and analysis modules provide information on how best to collect and analyze data.

Goal 3: Understand uses, impacts/benefits, value, and other aspects of library services and programs to library community and funders.

Instructional and interactive EDMS modules provide information to users capable of helping users understand uses, impacts/benefits, value, and other aspects of library services and programs. This understanding will help users better identify and determine the value of the services and resources they provide to the community they serve. This understanding will also help EDMS participants' better advocate to their library and library community the importance and need to support ongoing and future services and resources (i.e. goal 4 below).

Goal 4: Better advocate locally the benefits, impacts, and value of library services and programs to the public library community and funders.

Along with the instructional modules, the interactive modules provide information and products (i.e. generated reports and a library value calculator) capable of helping users understand uses, impacts/benefits, value, and other aspects of library services and programs. Use of the modules (i.e. instructional and interactive) allows users to present local level value of the library's services and resources to library community and funders based on local library situational factors. Identification and determination of the value of a library's services and resources also allows local library managers, state library librarians and data coordinators,

organizations such as ALA, and library researchers to advocate for additional funding to support existing programs and to expand/pilot new library services and programs.

Project Objectives

To achieve the goals presented above, the project has the following objectives:

1. Compare and contrast the types of data that leading evaluation approaches provide public library managers and what such data enable managers to say about their library services and resources;
2. Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of leading evaluation approaches;
3. Describe the success with which selected public libraries are currently employing a number of different evaluation approaches;
4. Better understand how library situational factors (organizational, community, other) affect the successful use of leading evaluation approaches;
5. Develop guidelines and practical recommendations to assist library managers in selecting appropriate evaluation approaches and under what circumstances selected evaluation approaches offer a *best fit* given their evaluation needs;
6. Provide assistance in using evaluation data for library advocacy purposes; and
7. Design and create a *nationwide* and *sustainable* EDMS to facilitate assessment efforts in public libraries, based on an iterative development process with project partners.

Meeting the objectives above helps the study team to meet the goals of the project.

Comparison of Project Accomplishments to Project Objectives

The instructional modules address objectives 1-5 above. The modules provide an introduction to conducting evaluation, overview of selected evaluation approaches, and an overview on how to collect and analysis data. The instructional modules include discussions of types of data each evaluation approach produces, application of the types of data, an understanding of the importance of recognizing and conducting data collection activities based on local situational factors, and provides guidelines and recommendations on how to successfully conduct evaluation efforts.

The instructional modules also provide assistance in using evaluation data for library advocacy purposes (see objective 6 above) in the form of self-paced learning/instructional modules. More specifically, however, objective 6 is met with the inclusion of contact and feedback forms linked from the end of each instructional module and the development of the *Ask an Expert* template (see *Commons*) where users can directly contact experts in specific areas of evaluation for questions and clarification.

Development of the EDMS meets objective seven. Development of the EDMS occurred as an iterative learning process with regularly scheduled feedback and guidance from the project partners and Advisory Committee.

Significant Project Achievements

i. Identify and document significant project **achievements** and their value.

This project includes a number of significant achievements. The *Project Overview* section (above) provides an overview of modules developed and implemented as part of the final product, the EDMS web site. The EDMS web site includes 14 instructional modules that provide an introduction to evaluation, overviews of selected evaluation approaches, and data collection and analysis guidance and recommendations. Of particular significance is the development of interactive modules that utilize *on-the-fly* integration technology of national survey data into templates that allow users to prepare customizable reports capable of describing the value of library services and resources, identifying local level Internet connectivity related issues, and for advocacy purposes at the local, state, and national levels. Interactive modules include:

- Five library profile reports (see *Interactive Modules*) that allow users to create local level profiles based on NCES and Internet survey data;
- An innovative and versatile *Library Value Calculator* (see *Library Evaluation Tools*) that allows local libraries to estimate the current value of services and resources and to also estimate future value of added services and resources;
- *Tell the Story* module that is of particular interest to public library managers in that local, state, and national level data is presented in graphic formats of templates that allow users to prepare customized reports for value and advocacy purposes; and
- *State Library Statistical Modules* developed specifically for state library librarians and data coordinators. This module provides graphically presented state level statistics for comparison to national averages in a report template that allows users to customize reports for value and advocacy purposes.

In addition, the EDMS contains four contact templates designed to streamline contact between users, study team members, and selected evaluation experts. The contact templates include *Contact Us*, *Feedback*, *Suggest a Resource*, and *Ask an Expert*.

Also of significance is the ongoing design and implementation process of the site. The initial phase of the project included data collection through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. These data collection efforts provided needs assessments for a number of national stakeholder groups that include local public library managers, state library librarians and data coordinators, and ALA staff members. Based on the results of these data collection efforts (see *Lessons Learned* below for an overview of results), the study team was able to design and implement modules that better meet the needs of a diverse group of national stakeholders.

Significant Unanticipated Events or Circumstances that Created Delays or Obstacles to Project Success

ii. Describe any significant unanticipated events or circumstances that created delays or obstacles to project success, and **summarize lessons learned** during the course of the project. OMB No. 3137-0071, exp. 7/31/2010

The original proposal for the development of the EDMS provided a number of technical and conceptual challenges to the study team that have required some study team re-thinking of how best to design and implement the various modules. Especially challenging has been the effort to develop customized reports for individual libraries as part of the interactive modules and to link data from the NCES and Internet survey databases to these reports. Resolving these issues required more time and technical expertise than originally anticipated and created the need to request an extension of the project.

Lessons Learned

This section provides an overview of lessons learned from initial data collection efforts that include:

- Focus groups and interviews with 84 library managers and state librarians at 19 public libraries and five state libraries in five states (Texas, Iowa, New Jersey, Oregon and Florida) beginning January 20 and ending April 13, 2006;
- Annual meetings and surveys with the project's partners and Advisory Committee members; and
- Reviews of 28 LSTA annual reports received from five state libraries and available from state library web sites.

This section also includes lessons learned throughout the development of the project's primary product, the EDMS web site, and five training sessions conducted from February 2009 – April 2009 in four states (Texas (1), Florida (2), New York (1) and Oregon (1)) with 73 library managers trained at the end of the project on the use and usefulness of the EDMS web site as part of the project's outcomes assessment process.

Data Collection Activities across Five States

Initial data collection activities occurred in five states: Texas, Iowa, New Jersey, Oregon and Florida (January 20, 2006 - April 13, 2006). The study team visited five State Library agencies and nineteen public libraries in the five states to conduct interviews and focus groups. A total of 84 library managers were interviewed. The purpose of these activities was to gain an understanding of specific situational factors and contexts within a library setting that affect public library evaluation efforts, evaluation data needs of libraries, and how library managers can best determine the value of a library's services and resources. The lessons learned from the initial best practice review (interviewing 84 library managers conducted in the five states) include:

- There is far more diversity in potential EDMS audiences than first contemplated. This suggested two potential EDMS design modifications: 1) choose to focus on one audience (or a cluster of audiences with related needs); or, 2) offer each audience identified a well-designed versatile demonstration product, one that demonstrates the impacts of additional evaluation funding and effort;
- As proposed originally, EDMS may be best suited for library school students and faculty users and possibly large urban libraries, library systems, and libraries with dedicated evaluation staff. Even within this grouping, library practitioners may be oriented

differently than library school members; practitioners oriented to evaluation problem solving; and academics oriented to evaluation technique or theory; and

- There may be a fundamental shift in expectation regarding what web based training systems, like EDMS, offer. The centerpiece of prior training systems was on presentation of theory and technique. Next generation systems, such as the EDMS may need to focus on a pragmatic, needed (and motivating) evaluation product with an interactive approach to data collection; tentative analysis presented in draft form and in a ready to use format; and evaluation theory and technique modules offered in a supporting role. Library managers interviewed would readily embrace this type of approach with its emphasis on pragmatic, easy to do evaluations, and ready to use evaluation products.

With the advent of library networks, it becomes possible, indeed necessary, to rethink who could/should be doing what aspects of an evaluation process, and where. The results of the focus groups and interviews raised the following questions: Is it necessary or even desirable for a local library manager to conduct all aspects of a library evaluation (i.e. data collection, analysis, presentation) or train to do so in a networked environment? Alternatively, should evaluation systems like EDMS be contemplating, indeed prototyping distributed, networked library evaluation decision-management systems? These are the types of questions that ultimately defined development and implementation of the EDMS.

Data Collection Activities with Project Partners and Advisory Committee

The lessons learned from initial data collection efforts (i.e. 12 surveys) with project partners (4) and Advisory Committee members (7) provide a best practice review that indicates the need for both formal and informal evaluation processes for reporting, funding, and advocacy purposes. These participants supplied feedback on the types of evaluations used by their libraries or library systems, applications of the evaluations, reasons for selections of the evaluations, areas of application of the evaluations, and valuing and advocacy efforts supported by the evaluations.

Typically, state library participants apply formal evaluation efforts at a broad perspective regarding stakeholder needs, funding opportunities, reporting requirements, and marketing efforts. Public library participants, however, indicate the need for both informal and formal evaluation as well, but suggest that most formal evaluation efforts are beyond their local library resource availabilities and/or staff capabilities. They indicate their staffs are capable and willing to conduct more formal type evaluations but require training and training aides to do so. Public library participants also tend to apply evaluations locally and suggest that it is difficult to apply broad-based required outcomes and outcomes assessments to local situations.

In addition, reporting is difficult for local public library staff. Participants suggest this is also due to the broader base of data needs for external reporting along with a willingness but lack of training for library staffs in the use of evaluations needed to collect the data, the lack of training aides in reporting the results of evaluation, and the lack of training on how to successfully advocate the value and usefulness of library services and resources to funders and their local community. Public library participants all indicate a willingness to conduct more evaluations; however, they also indicate they need training in the use of evaluations and several

indicated a need for templates, simple but inclusive guidelines, and examples of prior evaluations (sample reports).

Review of LSTA Reports

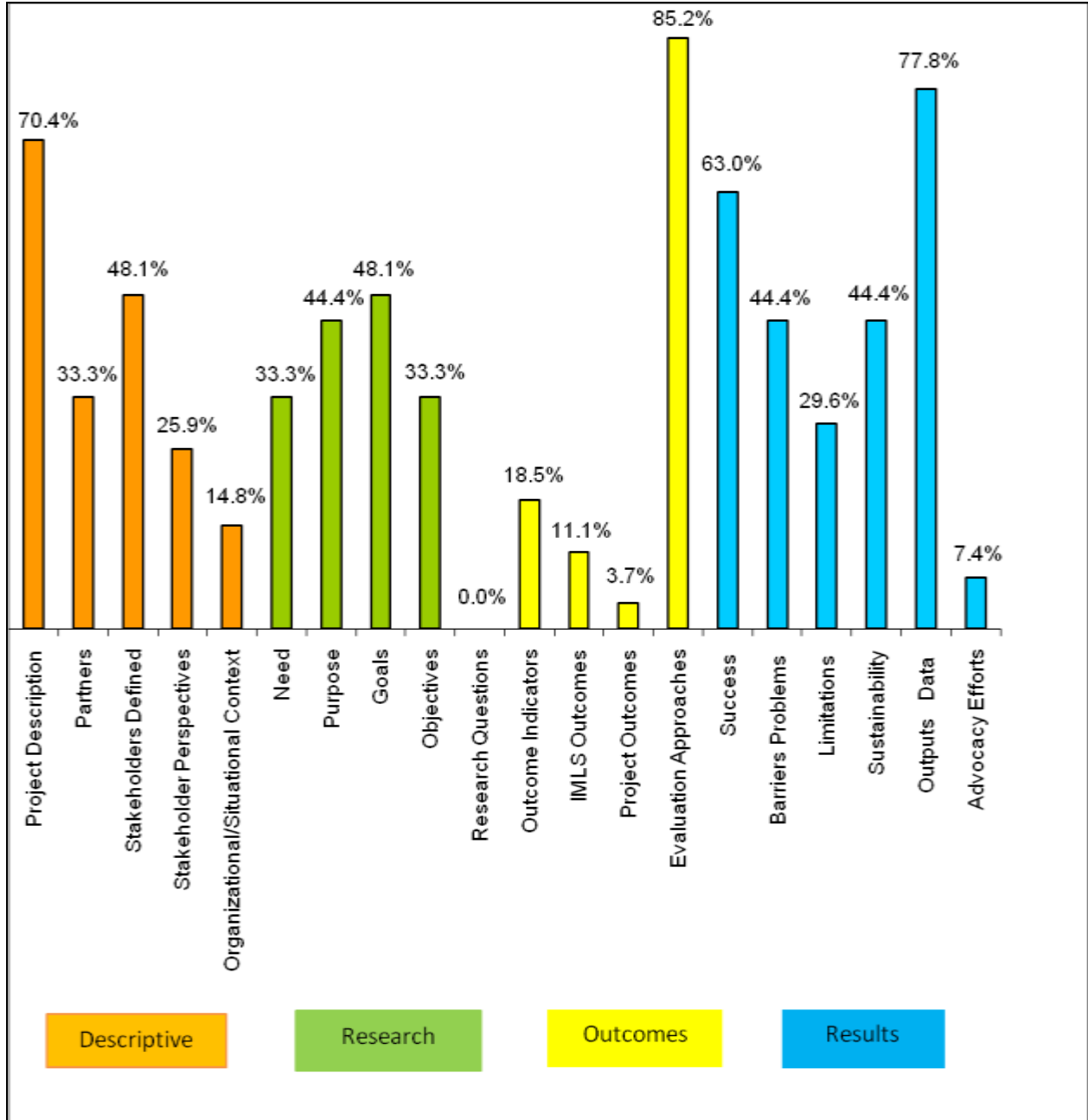


Figure 1: Cumulative Evaluation Factors by Percentage

The purpose of reviewing LSTA reports is to identify and assess existing evaluation approaches and practices found in final LSTA grant reports. To accomplish this purpose, the research team assessed the content of 28 LSTA annual reports collected directly from five state library agencies and from additional reports posted on state library web sites. Figure 1 (below)

presents the 20 evaluation factors by percentage of reports with a specific factor as found from the assessment of the selected LSTA reports.

LSTA reports require reporting of data collection efforts and a final outcomes assessment. To evaluate the LSTA reports for data collection efforts and the outcomes assessment, the research team identified twenty evaluation factors that together create a comprehensive evaluation reporting effort from planning to data collection to analysis to reporting results. The evaluation factors were then categorized into four areas of interests: descriptive factors, research factors, outcomes assessment factors, and results factors. Each LSTA report was evaluated for the presence of the factors.

These relationships, along with several additional findings and observations for figure 1 above are presented below. The relationships, findings, and observations include:

- Library descriptions are often given in lieu of program descriptions. Figure 1 shows 70.4% of the reports offer project descriptions. Of the remaining, nearly all described the library instead of the project with no relation offered of the description to the project;
- Narrative approaches tend to focus upon project description, evaluation description, and evaluation results (generally counts of programs, trainings, total resources used, etc.) without considering or reporting relationships to goals, objectives, or outcomes. This leads to narratives and reported findings that may not be closely related to the purpose of the project or difficult to establish relationships based on the narratives;
- When goals or outcomes are mentioned within the narrative, at times they are simply mentioned as being met with little or no discussion of how;
- Outcomes and goals are often discussed without identifying the actual outcomes or goals within the narrative;
- Many of the goals mentioned in the narratives are actually the outcome indicators and not project goals;
- Library statistics (i.e., usage, budget, other resource allocations, etc.) are often used to support the project findings instead of showing how project findings are related to outcomes or goals of the project; and
- Figure 1 (above) shows 14.8% of the reports list outcomes. Of the 85.2% that do not list outcomes, many label/list outputs as outcomes.

In addition to library practices, the library reports include a variety of types of evaluations. These types of evaluation are primarily, but not always associated with the project activities and include: outputs (primary evaluation method); activity surveys (library use, opinion, demographic); activity focus groups (informal); observation to collect anecdotal data; and studies/reports (marketing, return on investment).

The research team used evaluation factors to gain an understanding of library-practitioner research practices and the assessment of reports to identify types of evaluations used in funded research projects. With the exclusion of outcomes and outcomes indicators, the remaining evaluation factors can be applied to other evaluation efforts to gain an understanding of other library and/or researcher practices.

Summary of Initial Data Collection Efforts

The general purpose of the initial data collection efforts was to identify and assess existing evaluation approaches and practices. The objectives for completing initial data collection efforts include: 1) describe the success with which selected public libraries are currently employing a number of different evaluation approaches; and 2) better understand how library situational factors (i.e. organizational, community, other) affect the successful use of leading evaluation approaches.

The research team conducted a literature review to identify *best practice* evaluation activities as a means of meeting objectives 1-2 of this research project. Summaries of the findings are the need to:

- Understand that relational factors within specific library settings influence the kind of data needed for informed decision-making practices, factors such as:
 1. Identify affected stakeholders;
 2. Understand stakeholder perspectives;
 3. Recognize that different types of evaluation frameworks are available; and
 4. Account for different organizational and situational context as part of the evaluation process.
- Determine the type of data or information need based on relational factors to answer or address questions or concerns from stakeholders, library funders, library boards, government agencies, library management, etc.;
- Select the best evaluation approach to meet the data need by matching evaluation approaches to data types; and
- Present approaches, content, and other resources in ways in which the library community understands, finds usable, and can adapt for their needs.

Understanding relational factors; how these factors affect evaluation and data need selection; and matching data needs to the best evaluation strategy; will deliver the most impact for resources allocated for library service, programs and activities.

The research team also completed additional assessments to meet the project's objectives. These efforts were: 1) identification of best practice and problematic evaluation practices in various library settings with a range of advocacy needs; 2) identification of evaluation practices in public libraries; and 3) review LSTA final library reports.

The purpose of these activities was to gain an understanding of specific situational factors and contexts within a library setting that affect public library evaluation efforts, data needs, and the ability to advocate for libraries in the communities that they serve. Additionally, the purpose is to understand evaluation needs in applying evaluation approaches within the public library arena and the types of needs for conducting evaluations. Key issues and findings from the evaluation include:

- Public library managers, library practitioners, and state library managers agree that formal and informal evaluation processes are necessary for reporting, funding, and advocacy purposes;
- There is a broad range of available evaluations within the public library field and library practitioners need access to these evaluation approaches to meet diverse needs;
- Public library managers primarily conduct evaluations to improve library operations at a local level, show library quality and values, and to meet requirements of funders, library boards, state agencies, and others.
- State, and national government agencies apply formal evaluation efforts at a broader perspective regarding stakeholder needs, funding opportunities, reporting requirements, and marketing efforts;
- Reporting is difficult for public library managers/staff due in part to the broader base of data needs for external reporting along with a willingness but lack of training in the use of evaluations needed to collect data, the lack of training aides in reporting results of evaluation, and the lack of training on how to successfully advocate for library needs;
- Narrative approaches to reporting, as preferred by library practitioners tend to focus upon project description and presenting evaluation results as counts of programs, trainings, and/or total resources used with less focus on relationships of results to goals, objectives, or outcomes. This leads to narratives and reported findings where the relationship of findings to the purpose of the evaluation may not be close or clear;
- Public library participants apply evaluations locally and suggest that it is difficult to apply broad-based required outcomes and outcomes assessments to local situations; and
- Web based training and education systems should focus on pragmatic and motivating presentations that are interactive for data collection; contain templates and instructions for ready-made applications of approaches; and include instructions on how to apply results for advocacy purposes.

Critical factors affecting successful evaluations in libraries identified by public libraries are *Staff Knowledge* and *Staff Time*.

Also, library managers indicate that their staff members are capable of conducting evaluations but often lack training and/or the time necessary to conduct evaluations successfully. Key factors noted that could directly influence or affect successful implementation of an evaluation for public libraries include:

- Library management support of the evaluation;
- Training of library staff in conducting the assessments;
- Available training resources (i.e., outcomes toolkits, websites, etc.);
- Commitment of library staff to conduct the assessments; and
- Time provided for library staff to conduct the assessments.

A key factor associated with *lack* of evaluation success in public libraries is inadequate evaluation knowledge and training of library staff to conduct the assessment.

In addition, the research team met with project partners and advisory committee member in New Orleans, 25 June 2006 to discuss findings from initial data collection efforts. Based on results of the New Orleans meeting with the project partners and Advisory Committee, the research team focused on developing questions and scenarios for the initial development of module content and design. The research team collected suggestions from the project partners and Advisory Committee members to address the 6-10 most commonly asked questions by public library managers (i.e. from focus groups and interviews) regarding conducting evaluation efforts. The research team developed a list of scenarios for module content development based on the meeting along with questions and scenarios to guide the initial content development and EDMS design phases.

Web Site Content Development Lessons Learned

Based on the initial data collection activities, a gap exists between public library managers' views of evaluation needs and what national level evaluators, funders, and the academic community view as evaluation needs. Public library managers primarily think of evaluation in terms of use. Examples of use identified by interviewed public library managers include:

- Improve or pilot library operations to “find out how we are doing,” to “better pilot and learn what needs attention,” and to “improve library operations and services.” There is particular interest in “workload management” evaluation, such as how does the introduction or modification of a library service impact staff workload?
- Determine value of services and resources to show a library's worth to funders and the public; and
- Meet requirements placed on the library, i.e. “We do some evaluations because we have to, such as the annual statistical report [required by the state].”

Public library managers' first priority is how an evaluation helps the local library. The further the evaluation moves away from the local the less important it becomes. Expressing evaluation in terms of methodologies (quantitative or qualitative, outputs, impacts) may not help orient public library managers in the same way and to the same degree as it does national policy makers and the academic community.

Public library managers' pragmatic evaluation questions include, “do I (or someone on my staff or someone I know) know how to do the evaluation, do I have the time, money, resources, and are the results good enough to persuade my audience?” Getting the evaluation *right* often appears as a luxury they cannot afford or they cannot obtain at any price.

Public and state library managers interviewed did not separate or strongly distinguish between presentation techniques (how evaluation results are packaged and presented) and evaluation (data collection and analysis). In their view, effective presentation and repackaging/reusing evaluation results for multi purposes and audiences were all part of the same skill set. All had seen examples of good data poorly presented and minimal data having significant impact due to good presentation. Public library managers would suggest that the

EDMS should pay as much attention to the means of presentation as the means of data collection and analysis.

Training Sessions Lessons Learned

Study team members conducted five half day workshops on the use and usefulness of the EDMS in four states (Texas, Florida, New York and Oregon). The four training session locations include:

- Texas State Library, Austin, Texas April 10, 2009 with 10 State Library Development trainers;
- Southeast Florida Library Information Network (SEFLIN), Miami Gardens, Florida April 21, 2009 with 23 library administrators and an academic library assistant dean;
- Southwest Florida Library Network (SWEFLIN), Ft Myers, Florida April 27 with 5 library managers;
- Mid-York Library System, Utica, New York May 13, 2009 with 15 state library staff, public library system administrators; and
- Oregon Public Library Director's Meeting, Seaside, Oregon May 29, 2009 with 25 public library directors and Oregon State Librarian in attendance.

The five training sessions occurred from May through April 2009.

There were a total of 78 participants in the half day workshops. Workshop participants were very enthusiastic about the EDMS web site both in concept and execution. In particular their comments include:

- EDMS provides instruction on the use of practical evaluation approaches;
- Liked the low cost evaluation techniques including the re-use of data collected for other purposes;
- The modules were "meaty."
- The presence of additional resource links was useful; and
- The emphasis on using evaluations to promote advocacy and provide evidence for continued/new funding is useful for local and state level advocacy.

Overall, the general response was positive to the instructional modules and advocacy tools; however, most did not think the national database reports were very useful at the local level.

In addition to comments on the use and usefulness of the EDMS, the study team asked participants for recommendations to improve the web site. Selected recommended improvements include:

- "Make the web site less book like. Take advantage of the latest social networking features." Make more use of graphics and video tutorials. Many participants were intrigued by the potential of various interactive features of the present EDMS web site. One library and information professor is actively exploring her students' future use of the EDMS *Ask an Expert* listserv;

- There was interest in practical evaluation modules around frequently used evaluation tasks. E.g., completing competitive grant evaluations, producing annual reports and budget documentation, evaluating core recurring programs such as summer reading. Wanted was an interactive form approach (“I want to be able to just fill in the blanks with my data.”) and lots of examples;
- Many of the workshop participants were trainers in state and regional library development. They viewed EDMS as a useful library evaluation training tool;
- Some would like to see more comparisons among the methods presented. The need was to think through when one evaluation technique might be more appropriate than another;
- Some wanted the modules to have more use of non library data (e.g., census);
- Address ways to show the value of emerging library broadband Internet applications for funding and improved library management; and
- Adding a “Did You Know” feature highlighting an “evidence-based statistic” for use in weekly newspaper columns.

Overall, half day workshop participants made a number of useful suggestions for EDMS Improvements and next steps.

Project Outcomes

c. For projects that identified learning of any kind as an intended result, describe the *outcomes* of the project. For this report *outcomes* are changes in **individuals’**: knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, or other conditions related to the purpose of the project.

The study team developed outcomes, and indicators for each outcome at the beginning of this project. Data collected for assessment of outcomes came from the initial data collection activities conducted to develop EDMS content and from the five training sessions held in four states at the end of the project previously discussed in this report. The outcomes of this project, the initial indicator for each outcome, and an assessment of the outcomes are presented below by outcome. Outcomes for this project include:

Outcome 1: Public library librarians, managers, and practitioners identify data needs of patrons, the library community, and funding agencies.

Indicator: 75% of participants successfully match data needs to data recipients

Assessment: All participants of initial interviews, focus groups, and surveys identified data needs of specific stakeholder groups such as library patrons, the library community, and funding agencies. Local library managers, librarians, and library staff tended to identify specific data needs of local stakeholder groups with some identifying data needs for required state and national level data collection efforts, such as for required reporting efforts. State librarians, project partners, and the Advisory Committee tended to initially identify broader data needs of state and national funding agencies; however, the project partners and Advisory Committee members also identified specific data needs of local libraries at

meetings held throughout the project to determine the content and design of the EDMS.

Outcome 2: Public library librarians, managers, and practitioners identify data sources provided by services and programs within specific library situational contexts.

Indicator: 75% of participants successfully identify data sources provided by library services and programs

Assessment: Initial interviews and focus groups included questions, with explanations that explain/describe local library situational factors. All participants of initial interviews, focus groups, and surveys were able to identify data sources provided by a library's services and programs within specific library situational contexts. Library managers, librarians, and library staff tended to identify data sources useful to the local library and the community the library serves. State librarians, project partners, and Advisory Committee members tended to identify additional data sources provided by a library's services and resources that were useful to a broader stakeholder group, i.e. data sources useful when aggregated for reporting to state and national funding sources.

Outcome 3: Public librarians and managers select evaluation approaches appropriate to targeted data needs within specific situational contexts.

Indicator: 75% of participants match evaluation approach to data collection within specific situational contexts; EDMS evaluation module tutorial test results

Assessment: All participants of the training sessions indicated that the instructional modules viewed adequately provide information needed to match the evaluation approach to specific data collection needs.

Outcome 4: Public librarians, library managers, and library practitioners disseminate evaluation results.

Indicator: 75% of participants successfully create evaluation report

Assessment: All participants (i.e. library managers and library staff) of the five training sessions indicated they could develop evaluation reports, primarily related to the *Tell the Story* module (see *Library Report Modules*). Participants also indicated a need for additional modules like the *Tell the Story* module that provide guidance and report templates to produce the report.

Outcome 5: Project partners along with other identifiable and interested participants (libraries, library agencies, library schools, etc.) develop community and funding agency evaluation plans.

Indicator 1: 50% of participants successfully create evaluation plans using the EDMS planning module templates

Assessment: The project's partners and Advisory Committee members indicated in meetings with the study team on content of EDMS modules that they could develop evaluation plans from at least one of the EDMS *Instructional Modules*, the *Tell the Story* module (see *Interactive Modules*), and/or the *State Library Statistical Module* (see *Interactive Modules*).

Indicator 2: 50% of participants plan to participate in the dissemination of the EDMS project results

Assessment: The project's partners and Advisory Committee members all have substantial experience and interest in public library related evaluation efforts and provide an important practitioner-based perspective for the project in general and development of the project web site in particular. The project partners and the members of the Advisory Committee all agreed at the beginning of the project to participate in the dissemination of the EDMS project results. The study team anticipates ongoing participation from these partners and Advisory Committee members as dissemination of the results of the project continue beyond the end date of the project.

Project Impacts and Benefits

c. Provide any additional information or data that documents project impact. For this report *impact* is a large-scale and/or long-term result that **affects one or more institutions, communities, or fields.**

The study team developed the EDMS to benefit a variety of local and national stakeholder groups, i.e. local level public library managers, state library librarians and data coordinators, academic researchers, library school students, national organizations such as ALA, and federal agencies such as IMLS. For public library managers, EDMS instructional modules identify specific evaluations that can help pilot, value, or meet a requirement. Additionally, the instructional modules describe how long it will take to conduct the evaluation; time, money, staff resources needed; and how quickly an evaluation allows the library manager to determine whether the results will persuade an intended audience. Based on training sessions, the instructional modules and the interactive *Tell the Story* module best meet public library manager needs. With additional training, public library managers will find the *Library Profile* reports useful for comparison of the local library to state and national averages. Public library managers will also find that the *Library Value Calculator* is of particular use in determining local level value of provided services and resources for advocacy purposes.

EDMS *Interactive Modules* are of primary interest to interviewed state librarians, state library data coordinators, and ALA staff. These modules utilize national library datasets (i.e. read as existing data sources), such as those from NCES and the Information Institute along with

integrated EDMS technology that allows report generation capabilities. These datasets contain data that is useful for comparison across libraries of a state and across states, and the report generation features of the EDMS allow users to add text to report generated graphics (i.e. pie charts, tables, and other representations) for presentations, advocacy, and planning purposes. Of particular interest at the state and national level are reports generated from the *State Library Statistical Module* that provide state level data as graphics and tables in a report format with text fields throughout the report.

NEXT STEPS

8. What's next? Describe any plans to continue work in this area.

The Information Institute will continue to host the EDMS. The site includes interactive templates that allow users to communicate with the study team (i.e. *Contact Us* and *Send Feedback* templates); with experts in different areas of evaluation (i.e. the *Ask an Expert* template); and with other users of the web site (i.e. the *Threaded Discussion List Index* and the *Suggest a Resource* template). The Information Institute will continue to monitor these areas of the site and to respond to user's inquiries, suggestions, and comments.

In addition, the Information Institute will continue to promote and market the EDMS through publications and conference presentations and to seek additional financial support for the EDMS that will promote ongoing updates, revisions, new module developments, and system enhancements. The study team will seek partners capable of providing additional funding for continued development of modules and other features of the web site, or who will agree to host the site and fund ongoing development of the site.

9. Grant Products. **Attach three copies** of any product that resulted from grant activities, including final evaluation reports and instruments; research findings, publications, or manuscripts; software; curriculum guides, workbooks, or other learning resources; and other deliverables. Provide Web-based material in hard-copy form or on disk with a description of the content and format. Forward any product that is not yet complete to IMLS as it becomes available.

Instructions

Final product is an instructional web site, the EDMS, available at <http://libevaluation.com/edms/>.