

## Introduction

A letter to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) from WSL described a plan for evaluation of Washington state's LSTA program that would comply with IMLS guidelines and LSTA regulations. That letter indicated that WSL would issue an RFP to obtain an outside evaluator. The letter further stated that it was the intent of the WSL to select a person or group to conduct an independent evaluation that would lend credibility to the review and to select an evaluator that had the expertise to evaluate implementation of the program.

The evaluator was to conduct plan and policy review; review plan goals, objectives, and accomplishments; review programmatic implementation; conduct results analysis; and develop and deliver the report. The general methodology was to include use of existing data sources whenever possible. Existing data was to include information gathered from focus groups, Statewide Plan forums, surveys, annual reports, and sub-grantee reports. Existing data also included compilation of WSL LSTA funded activities including information about the Library Council of Washington (LCW) LSTA proposal process, project proposals and reports, grant guidelines, grant applications, and awards.

The development of the evaluation report actually occurred as a two-part process. The first part was the development of the general evaluation conducted by the outside reviewer. The second part was the development of a narrative covering lessons learned and future directions, developed by WSL staff and the LCW. Together, both parts would form the LSTA Five-Year Evaluation Report for Washington state.

Washington state policy requires that good faith efforts be made to use the professional expertise and services available through other public entities, such as state agencies, universities, and similar entities, prior to releasing a formal request for proposals to private individuals or organizations. In March 2001, the WSL identified several public agencies and entities with the likely expertise to complete the evaluation. Each entity was contacted as to their availability to perform these services. The description of services required was e-mailed to four entities (three departments at two universities, and one state agency). The Information School of the University of Washington was selected and an interagency agreement was formalized for the completion of services. Matthew L. Saxton, Assistant Professor within the Information School, was the principal researcher for this project. Throughout the development of the report, several graduate assistants assisted Mr. Saxton.

The evaluation was conducted using existing sources of data supplemented by meetings and interviews with WSL staff. Staff at WSL met with Information School researchers on a number of occasions answering questions, providing information, and clarifying issues about the LSTA program at WSL. Mr. Saxton met with LCW on two occasions. He presented the draft report and preliminary results at these meetings. The final report from the Information School at the University of Washington was received by WSL on February 5, 2002.

The second part of the evaluation report was the development of a narrative covering lessons learned and future program directions. This report was developed by WSL staff and LCW. The report builds upon the general evaluation report by describing in more detail the processes used to implement the LSTA program in Washington state, reviewing the existing Five-Year Plan at the objective/action plan level, summarizing feedback received on the program, and describing lessons learned and future directions.

Both reports were reviewed and accepted at the April 17, 2002 Washington State Library Commission (WSLC) meeting prior to their submittal to the IMLS.