

Pilot States: Revamping the LSTA Annual Report

In January, the Washington State Library along with 14 other state libraries beta tested the new Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) reporting system. Given the vendors short time frame for developing the system, many bugs were found and reported. The vendor tried to fix problems on the fly while beta testers continued their work. After several weeks of testing, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) decided to re-group to give the vendor more time to work out the “wrinkles” so to speak.

The new plan is for reporting to begin in early April with a May 30th deadline for submission of the narrative side of the report. The Financial Status Report (FSR) process did not change. We provided our submission of the FSR prior to the December 30, 2013 deadline.

The new reporting system attempts to better relate similar projects and activities across all states. In the past, IMLS has noted different states have varied approaches to reporting the same activities. In addition it is the desire of IMLS to gather additional information for desktop monitoring to better ensure states are following federal code of regulations. The third attempt by IMLS is to gather better geographic location information such that individual Congressional members may be better informed about activities within their district.

As such IMLS is developing a common vocabulary for reporting. The new reporting system will include “intents” and other information to clarify more specifically the area and subject of the “intent.” It will also include “activities” which implement the “intent” along with “modes,” “formats,” “partnerships,” and “beneficiaries” which further describe how something is done and who it impacts. Locale becomes more important in reporting. This means some of the subgrants which we used to bundle together in a single report will now need to be reported individually.

The other area of reporting which will substantially increase in both volume of data needed and complexity is financial reporting on projects. Similar to our own processes for subgrantees, each project and each subgrant will need to provide expenditure data at the Object and Subobject levels of coding. Previously we reported a single set of numbers at a summary level. Because states vary somewhat in how fiscal information is organized, we will likely need to create reports which cross Object and Subobject boundaries pulling the information together in some areas and excluding fiscal information in others.

If all goes as planned, all states will move to this portion of the reporting process and pilot states will pilot a new version of “outcomes” reporting.