



Rhode Island Department of Administration  
Office of Library and Information Services

# Five-Year State Plan

for Library Services and Technology Act Funding  
2023-2027

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## Introduction

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. The IMLS Grants to States program distributes Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding to state library administrative agencies across the country, including the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS). LSTA funding provides approximately 45% of OLIS' budget and is critical in the development of programs and services that support Rhode Island's libraries.

The IMLS Grants to States program supports the purposes and priorities outlined in LSTA as stated in 20 U.S.C. § 9141:

1. expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats (including new and emerging technology), in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support such individuals' needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and financial literacy and other types of literacy skills;
2. establish or enhance electronic and other linkages and improved coordination among and between libraries and entities, as described in 20 U.S.C. § 9134(b)6, for the purpose of improving the quality of and access to library and information services;
3. a) provide training and professional development, including continuing education, to enhance the skills of the current library workforce and leadership, and advance the delivery of library and information services, and b) enhance efforts to recruit future professionals, including those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, to the field of library and information services;
4. develop public and private partnerships with other agencies and community-based organizations;
5. target library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills;
6. target library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty line (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with 42 U.S.C. § 9902(2)) applicable to a family of the size involved;
7. develop library services that provide all users access to information through local, state, regional, national, and international collaborations and networks; and
8. carry out other activities consistent with the purposes set forth in 20 U.S.C. § 9121, as described in the state library administrative agency's plan.

Funding is allocated to the states through a formula that includes a base grant plus a supplemental amount based on population. The IMLS requires each state to submit a plan that details service goals for a five-year period and to conduct an evaluation of projects and activities implemented under the plan.

OLIS is charged in Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) § 29-3.1-1 to cooperate with the IMLS and carry out the purposes of any and all acts of Congress for the benefit of library and information services in the state; RIGL § 29-3.1-7 further charges OLIS to develop the program for the use of federal funds. The OLIS Five-Year State Plan for the use of LSTA funds has been developed in accordance with the guidelines established by IMLS and the statutory mandates of the State of Rhode Island.

The OLIS Five-Year State Plan is derived from and aligns with the comprehensive OLIS Strategic Plan Framework, which addresses both state and federal mandates for library services. The foundation of both plans lies in the comprehensive assessment of statewide needs for library services and evaluation of the previous Five-Year State Plan for 2018-2022.<sup>1</sup> The Five-Year State Plan outlined in this document will be executed by OLIS staff from 2023-2027. The plan assumes funding of approximately \$1.2 million annually from IMLS. Progress and evaluation of plan goals and projects will be monitored through regular review of the plan and through the annual state program report to IMLS. In conjunction with the assessment of plan progress, the statewide needs for library services will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary.

*This Five-Year State Plan for the expenditure of federal LSTA funds was approved by the Library Board of Rhode Island, OLIS' advisory council, on June 13, 2022.*

## **Mission**

The Office of Library and Information Services strengthens, connects and empowers libraries to advance knowledge, connect communities and enrich the lives of all Rhode Islanders.

The mission of the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) is based on the fundamental vision that Rhode Island libraries inspire and transform lives. OLIS provides services and programs for all types of libraries, including but not limited to, academic, public, school and special libraries. These services include coordination of statewide resource sharing among libraries and the development of libraries to serve the library and information needs of all Rhode Islanders. OLIS also directly serves the public through the Talking Books Library, statewide databases and resources available on AskRI, and online directories to Rhode Island libraries and library services statewide.

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of Library and Information Services Strategic Plan Framework and documents used in developing the plan, including the environmental assessment and the LSTA Evaluation of the 2018-22 plan are available on the Office of Library and Information website at <https://olis.ri.gov/about/5yplan/2023/>

## Needs Assessment

### Demographics

Rhode Island is the smallest of the fifty states, encompassing an area of just 1,545 square miles, of which 511 square miles is water. With a population of 1,097,379<sup>2</sup> people occupying the 1,034 square miles of land, it is the second most densely populated state in the country after New Jersey. The population increased 4.3% in the past 10 years according to the 2020 Census, but the Census Bureau's *2020 Post-Enumeration Survey Estimation Report* released in May 2022 estimates that the state's population was overcounted by 5%. Rhode Island's population is expected to shrink marginally in the next five years. The state's primary political subdivisions are its 39 cities and towns, many of which encompass smaller villages with unique identities.

The demographics of the state's population are shifting, both in age and ethnic breakdown, and projected to continue to shift in the decade ahead. The percentage of children making up the population (birth to 18) has decreased by 1.4% in the past 10 years, and currently constitutes 19% of the total population. Rhode Island has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest percentage in the country of people over 18 years old; the percentage of residents age 60 years and over makes up 23% of the population, an increase of 3% since 2016.<sup>3</sup> The state has the highest percentage of people 85 and over in New England, and the third-highest percentage of people over 85 in the United States. There are 52, 128 veterans in the state, or 6.5% of the population over the age of 18; 28.7% of veterans have a disability. In 2019 the percentage of all non-veteran Rhode Islanders with a disability was 13.1%.

Racial and ethnic demographics have also shifted. From 2015 to 2020 the percentage of Black or African Americans increased from 7.9% to 8.5%, the population of Asians increased from 3.6% to 3.7%, and the population of Native Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders decreased from 1.2% to 0.2%. The population reporting that they were two or more races increased from 2.6% to 2.9%. The balance of the state's population, 83.6%, is White, though the percentage of Rhode Islanders who identify as White alone (not Hispanic or Latino) is 71.4%. The percentage of the population that reported ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino increased from 14.4% to 16.3%.<sup>4</sup> 22.4% of Rhode Islanders speak a language other than English at home, the most common of which include Spanish (123,414), Portuguese (29,268), French

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<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau, 2020 Census, April 1, 2020 version data is used throughout the plan.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/RI,US/PST040221>

<sup>3</sup> RI Office of Healthy Aging, Healthy Aging Data Report (2020),

<https://healthyagingdatareports.org/rhode-island-healthy-aging-data-report/>

<sup>4</sup> Federal policy defines "Hispanic" as an ethnicity, not a race. Hispanics may be any race, or multiple races.

(9,406), Haitian (8,894), Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese) (7,014), Italian (5,879), Khmer (4,795), and others including languages of Western Africa, Arabic, and Indo-European languages. The number of foreign-born residents has increased from 13.3% in 2015 to 14% in 2020. Data from the 2020 American Community Survey shows that the largest percentage of foreign-born residents are from Latin and South America (45%), followed by 21% from Europe, 19% from Asia and 13% from Africa (includes Cape Verde).

The state's population is concentrated in the capital city of Providence and its surrounding cities, which are the most diverse, while the western and southeastern parts of the state are less densely populated and more rural in character. From 2016 to 2020, the median household income was \$70,305, and per capita income was \$37,504. 10.6% of the total population lives under the federal poverty level, with the number increasing to 16% for children under 18. This disparity increases when looking at racial and ethnic diversity: 30% of Hispanic and 26% of Black children in Rhode Island live in poverty, followed by 11% of white children and 9% of Asian/Pacific Islander children. There are significant disparities across Asian ethnic groups, with significantly higher poverty rates for many Southeast Asian and South Asian groups. Urban communities have much higher rates of childhood poverty; between 2016 and 2020 almost two-thirds (64%) of Rhode Island's children living in poverty lived in just four cities – Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket. These cities, the urban core, had a combined child poverty rate of 30.2%.<sup>5</sup>

While 89.3% of Rhode Islanders over the age of 25 have a high school diploma and 34.8% hold a bachelor's degree or higher, the educational attainment of state residents is lower than other New England states. With nearly 11% of workforce adults lacking a high school diploma, Rhode Island has the lowest rate in New England of adults with high school credentials, and the second lowest rate of adults with a bachelor's or professional degree.

### **State Priorities**

On March 2, 2021, Daniel McKee, the Democratic Lieutenant Governor and former Mayor of Cumberland, became the 76th Governor of the State of Rhode Island, when then-Governor Gina Raimondo was appointed to a position in President Biden's cabinet. Throughout his career, Governor McKee has focused on accessible government, effective fiscal management, a high-quality public education for all students, equity and justice, and economic development centered on small businesses. Governor McKee's priorities for the state are laid out in the

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<sup>5</sup> Data on childhood poverty is from the 2022 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook, an in-depth analysis of data about Rhode Island's children. <https://www.rikidscount.org/Data-Publications/RI-Kids-Count-Factbook>

Rhode Island 2030 Plan,<sup>6</sup> which, in addition to response to and recovery from the pandemic, focuses on support for small businesses; investing in children, families and early education; strengthening K-12 and postsecondary education; enhancing workforce development and driving economic growth; prioritizing housing; enhancing public health and wellness; and advancing infrastructure and transportation.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic in RI**

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Rhode Island. Over 3,500 Rhode Islanders have died of COVID-19 and in 2020, COVID-19 was the third leading cause of death after heart disease and cancer. In April 2020, at the height of pandemic-related business closures, Rhode Island's unemployment rate rose to 17.4%. Substantial progress has been made with the State's unemployment rate decreasing to 3.2% in April 2022.

In addition to the economic impact, COVID-19 affected most aspects of education. Despite efforts by school leaders to keep students in school, learning disruptions occurred throughout 2021 according to a report by the RI Department of Education (RIDE). There were significant differences in the severity of the learning lost by students in urban districts versus those in suburban districts. The RIDE report notes that:

- A decline of 5.3% in RI Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS) ELA highlights the importance of parents establishing reading routines for all students – and requires a strong commitment from state and local leaders to improve third grade reading scores.
- The most significant drop in math scores were in RICAS math with a decline of 9.7%. School and local leaders must identify interventions and provide school tutoring support that aligns with the curriculum.

Pandemic related learning loss for third and eighth grade reading skills and math disproportionately affected children from lower income families, racial and ethnic minorities, and other circumstances like living in foster care or experiencing homelessness. The 2022 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook also reported that participation rates in programs like Early Intervention, Head Start and after-school programs have dropped significantly since before the pandemic.

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<sup>6</sup> Rhode Island 2030: Charting a Course for Future of the Ocean State, published October 2021. <https://www.ri2030.com/>

## Library Landscape

Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns are home to 48 public library systems with 71 locations, all of which belong to Ocean State Libraries, the public library consortium. There are 12 colleges and universities in the state; half of these institutions' libraries belong to HELIN, the higher education library consortium. Rhode Island has over 400 public and private K-12 schools, of which over two hundred belong to RILINK, the school library consortium, which serves 60% of the state's K-12 students. Additionally, there are several special libraries, including libraries at state agencies, the state historical society, and two subscription libraries.

Rhode Island libraries serve communities ranging from 1,000 people to 180,000 people, with 65% of public libraries serving communities of less than 25,000. School districts similarly serve a range of small rural communities to large urban areas. While poverty and unemployment are higher in urban areas, rural communities struggle with limited tax bases and pockets of poverty.

The University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Library and Information Studies (GSLIS), located in Kingston, has the only public university library degree program in New England; it plays a critical role in training librarians in Rhode Island and throughout the region. In the fall of 2021, GSLIS completed its transition to a completely online, accelerated program. The Rhode Island Library Association is the state chapter of the American Library Association and supports library professionals and staff in all types of libraries, including a section for school librarians, as well as actively promoting and lobbying for issues relevant to libraries.

OLIS has the statutory authority and responsibility to administer state and federal funding and a charge to develop and coordinate statewide programs to meet Rhode Island's needs for library and information services. The Library of Rhode Island (LORI) is the OLIS-administered library network that brings together the resources of libraries across the state, connecting different types of libraries and providing access to their collections for all Rhode Islanders. The network includes all public libraries, all academic libraries, 81 school libraries<sup>7</sup> and most special libraries, a total of 149 libraries with 178 library facilities. OLIS is advised by the 15-member Library Board of Rhode Island; its members are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate and represent different groups of library users and various types of libraries, including public, academic, school and special libraries.

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<sup>7</sup> School library participation decreased during the pandemic due to school closures but is expected to return to pre-pandemic levels.



## Library Needs

OLIS engaged Empower Success Corps (ESC) to conduct a comprehensive environmental assessment of the Rhode Island library landscape in March 2022. The project assessed the challenges and opportunities libraries encounter in their communities and OLIS strengths and weaknesses in supporting libraries, with the objective of identifying critical areas and key opportunities for the development of library services in the state over the next five years. Data was gathered through an online survey, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews with a total of 193 participants from all types of libraries and other stakeholders. The final report “Environment Assessment Report: Current and Future Needs for Library Services in Rhode Island” was published on the OLIS website in May 2022.

Respondents around the state identified several common trends and challenges in their communities, including:

- **Changing Populations.** More diverse population, more non-English speakers, more immigrants, and more people with divergent needs. Population is aging, with certain populations becoming increasingly isolated or marginalized.
- **Socio-Economic Issues.** Housing and food insecurity, poverty, addiction, mental health and other issues emanating from a lack of resources or unequal distribution of resources often compounded by a lack of convenient public transportation.
- **Pandemic Impact.** Learning loss, economic impact, and changing expectations for service providers, including maintaining services launched during the pandemic. More homeschooling and remote workers.
- **Digital Divide.** Lack of access to technology, affordable internet, and skills to navigate a digital world; those on the other side of the divide are at a substantial disadvantage. Public expectations for up-to-date technology and assistance with technology.
- **Polarization and Divisiveness.** Political extremism, increasing intolerance of different viewpoints, uncivil behavior, and disinformation.

Analysis of survey data showed that libraries’ priorities for the next five years reflect the identified community needs: diversifying collections; expanding access to ebooks, databases and technology; providing technology classes and one-on-one training; focusing on information literacy and adult education; and developing programs to reach underserved populations. But libraries face their own challenges in responding to these needs. Overarching trends and challenges to libraries include:

- **Funding.** Inequity of funding (especially public libraries), with increasing gaps between poorer and more affluent communities.
- **Staffing.** Library salaries are inadequate and do not attract people to the profession. More diversity in staffing is needed, yet the cost of / requirements for professional degrees are barriers to increasing diversity. There is an ongoing need to update and expand skills of library workers, including developing new leaders.
- **Print to Digital.** Print collections remain important but increasing demand for digital resources strains library resources.
- **Services Beyond the Building.** Demand for virtual services remains post-pandemic, with increasing demand for outreach services for those who cannot get to the library.
- **Technology Training and Digital Skills.** Increasing demand for training, assistance, and navigation in a digital world, while keeping up with the latest advances.
- **Increasing Expectations.** To provide social services, serve as a community center, support students and learners, and to meet the needs of remote learners and workers.
- **Promotion.** Need to raise awareness of services available at libraries and the value of libraries through consistent messaging at a statewide level.

Respondents were also asked to identify OLIS resources and services, both current and future, which were important to them and the communities they serve. These priority services aligned with goals successfully executed in the previous LSTA Five-Year State Plan and are services that generally receive high marks of satisfaction. The services ranked as most valuable by respondents include:

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Delivery                         | 9. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Programs |
| 2. Formula Grants (non-competitive) | 10. Adult Services                        |
| 3. Interlibrary Loan                | 11. Talking Books Library                 |
| 4. Children and Teen Services       | 12. FirstSearch                           |
| 5. Competitive Project Grants       | 13. Disaster & Preservation Planning      |
| 6. Summer Reading Program           | 14. Discussion groups (roundtables)       |
| 7. Continuing Education             | 15. Consultant or advisory services       |
| 8. AskRI                            | (for management issues)                   |

Respondents also identified the critical role that OLIS plays in creating a single collaborative library system across the state that connects different types of libraries and facilitates the free flow of resources and knowledge among them. OLIS was praised for its strong leadership and

dedicated staff, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when OLIS increased virtual learning and collaborative meeting opportunities and curated resources to help libraries respond to the pandemic. Many respondents specifically stated that OLIS played a crucial role in their ability to reopen their libraries safely and confidently. Respondents continue to look to OLIS to address current issues, lead innovation in library services, strengthen collaboration among libraries and with outside partners, and communicate effectively with and on behalf of all libraries.

In addition to the Environmental Assessment, OLIS reviewed the LSTA Five-Year State Plan Evaluation conducted by QualityMetrics, which outlined the success and shortcomings of the previous Five-Year Plan. OLIS also examined data collected annually through the Public Library Annual Survey and LORI Certification (which includes a technology scan of its 149 member libraries), through regular meetings and focus groups with public library directors during OLIS' pandemic response and relief efforts, and through the Talking Books Library biennial user satisfaction survey. This data, along with observations drawn from participation in state, regional and national organizations, provides the basis for Rhode Island's Five-Year State Plan.

Following analysis of the demographics of Rhode Island, the needs of its residents and libraries, current trends in library service, and the resources available, OLIS has identified the following service needs:

1. Equitable access to physical and online materials for learning, information and enrichment.
2. Access to services, especially for those who cannot use standard print materials because of a visual or physical disability.
3. Preserve and increase access to unique library materials.
4. Continuing education to support development of library staff, managers, and trustees through a variety of modalities including communities of practice, virtual and/or asynchronous learning, and learning cohorts.
5. Statewide programs to foster reading and support textual and other literacies, especially digital and information literacy.
6. Initiatives to support more culturally diverse and inclusive programming and collections in libraries and increase diversity in the library profession.
7. Partnerships to support adult education, workforce development, health and well-being, and cultural programming.
8. Programs to foster library development, including grants, consultant services, public relations, statistical analysis, and data utilization.

The needs identified can be broadly categorized into three main areas that will inform and drive the OLIS Five-Year State Plan for the expenditure of LSTA funds:

1. Core services – access to diverse physical and online materials and supporting services (Needs 1, 2 and 3)
2. Education – professional development for library staff and programming for libraries to better serve the public (Needs 4 and 5)
3. Community – development of library services to support and strengthen communities, with particular consideration of underserved populations and inclusive programming (Needs 6, 7 and 8)

The state's needs will continue to be monitored regularly between 2023 and 2027. OLIS will seek input from its advisory council, the Library Board of Rhode Island, which represents all types of libraries and users from various groups, including the economically disadvantaged and visually impaired. OLIS will also solicit input and assistance in the identification of changing trends and needs at periodic meetings with stakeholders, including library directors and library organizations. OLIS staff will monitor trends in library and information services at the regional and national level through conference attendance and organizational membership, while continuing to monitor socio-economic trends within the state that may impact activities or present opportunities throughout the duration of the plan.

## Goals

OLIS has established three goals that encompass the various needs identified and will guide OLIS projects over the next five years. The goals are designed to be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of libraries and Rhode Islanders, while providing a strong framework that enables OLIS to execute its mission. All goals have equal weight.

1. **Access.** Facilitate access to library materials and information resources in physical and digital formats for all Rhode Islanders.
2. **Learning.** Support the continuing education of librarians, library staff and trustees and the development of statewide programming for the public.
3. **Engagement.** Empower libraries to be incubators for economic, educational and cultural development, civic discourse, and healthy communities.

These goals address the purposes and priorities of LSTA per 20 U.S.C. § 9141:

LSTA Priorities*	Goal 1: Access	Goal 2: Learning	Goal 3: Engagement
1) expand services for learning and access to information and educational resources	✓	✓	✓
2) enhance linkages and improve coordination among libraries	✓		
3) provide training and development to enhance library workforce; enhance efforts to recruit future professionals		✓	✓
4) develop partnerships with other agencies and community groups	✓	✓	✓
5) target library service to individuals of diverse backgrounds and skills		✓	✓
6) target library services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved communities	✓		✓
7) develop services that provide all users access to information through local to national networks	✓		
8) carry out other activities consistent with LSTA purposes			✓

\*LSTA priorities are paraphrased; a complete listing is provided in the plan's Introduction on page 2.

## Projects

### Goal 1: Access

*Facilitate access to library materials and information resources in physical and digital formats for all Rhode Islanders.*

#### 1.1: Resource Sharing

**Purpose:** Resource sharing enables Rhode Islanders to obtain materials from over 175 libraries across the state at their local library through the Library of Rhode Island (LORI) network and to obtain digital materials online via AskRI, including databases, learning resources, and ebooks.

**Activities:** Annually certify libraries for membership in a multi-type resource sharing network and ensure compliance with network standards; provide an interlibrary delivery service to facilitate efficient statewide resource sharing; facilitate sharing of physical materials among libraries outside of their consortium or the state; provide access to databases, learning resources, and ebooks through a centralized online portal (AskRI).

**Advancing Equity:** Expand participation in resource-sharing activities by facilitating membership for school and other libraries currently unable to join or fully participate in the LORI network; promote databases, learning resources, and ebooks to underserved populations.

**Outcomes:** Rhode Islanders can obtain library materials that are not available at their local library quickly and efficiently to support their information needs; library capacity is strengthened and operations improved because libraries can fulfill patron requests for materials; learning and workforce support is provided 24/7 through online databases and learning resources; ebook access is expanded for Rhode Islanders.

**Partners:** HELIN, Massachusetts Library System, Ocean State Libraries, RILINK.

**Funding:** LSTA funds will support personnel costs, tools for facilitating ILL out-of-consortium, supplement delivery service, and supplement online digital resources. State funds will support some personnel costs and primarily fund interlibrary delivery services and statewide databases.

#### 1.2: Talking Books Library

**Purpose:** The Talking Books Library (TBL), Rhode Island's Regional Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, provides and increases access to public library services for state residents who are unable to use traditional print materials due to visual or print disability.

**Activities:** Provide physical and downloadable reading material and reading support services to individuals qualified for service; promote the service to eligible individuals; partner with

libraries and organizations to increase awareness of and participation in the program; and coordinate programs to expand access to library services for individuals with disabilities.

**Advancing Equity:** Explore programs and services to reduce the digital divide in the delivery of TBL services; provide targeted outreach to underserved communities.

**Outcomes:** Rhode Islanders with visual and print disabilities will have free and convenient access to reading materials through TBL and improved access to TBL services through libraries; libraries will have access to resources and training that will enable them to make their services more accessible to members of their community with disabilities.

**Partners:** INSIGHT, Providence VA Medical Center, RI Office of Rehabilitation Services, RI Veterans Home.

**Funding:** LSTA funds will support collection and equipment maintenance, warehousing, and distribution contracts with an external vendor; personnel costs and training. State funds will support some personnel costs.

### 1.3: Digitization, Preservation and Disaster Preparedness

**Purpose:** Preserving and digitizing collections increases access to library and cultural heritage materials in the present and in the future.

**Activities:** Provide tools and resources to assist with disaster preparedness; increase access to collections at libraries through digitization; and develop a single point of access to the digital collections of libraries, museums and cultural heritage organizations through the establishment of a RI hub for the Digital Public Library of America (RI-DPLA).

**Advancing Equity:** Support, promote and advance digitization activities at smaller institutions to ensure a diverse and inclusive representation of Rhode Island culture and history in RI- DPLA.

**Outcomes:** Library staff will have the tools, resources and knowledge to preserve and digitize collections and respond to disasters that endanger collections; Rhode Islanders will have improved access to unique materials through online digital collections.

**Partners:** Brown University Libraries, Providence Public Library, RI Emergency Management Agency.

**Funding:** LSTA funds will support personnel costs, program services and supplies, trainers, and grants. State funds will supplement some digitization initiatives and personnel costs.

## Goal 2: Learning

*Support the continuing education of librarians, library staff and trustees and the development of statewide programming for the public.*

### 2.1: Continuing Education

**Purpose:** Enhance the skills of the library workforce and library trustees by providing training, workshops, resources, and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and networking to strengthen programs and services in Rhode Island libraries.

**Activities:** Develop a regular schedule of training, workshops, and meetings aligned with needs identified in the library community, including topics such as youth services, library management, adult services, special collections, and trustee training; develop programs in partnership with other organizations; provide physical materials and online resources to support learning; and coordinate with other organizations to develop a systematic and coordinated approach to professional development. Training will be provided through in-person, online and asynchronous sessions and training outcomes will be evaluated regularly.

**Advancing Equity:** Expand and support training for paraprofessional staff, including opportunities to pursue professional credentials; develop accessible continuing education opportunities; support post-graduate professional development.

**Outcomes:** Librarians, library staff and trustees will have access to training and resources to increase their knowledge and expertise; Rhode Island libraries will be staffed by well-trained, knowledgeable staff who are informed of current trends, issues and library practice.

**Partners:** Rhode Island Library Association, University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Library and Information Studies.

**Funding:** LSTA funds will support personnel costs, trainers, program development, program supplies, and scholarships. State funds will support some personnel costs.

### 2.2: Reading and Literacy

**Purpose:** Literacy is the foundation for education, success and an informed democracy. Reading programs teach and advocate the importance of reading for educational success, personal enrichment, and pleasure for everyone from the very young to older adults.

**Activities:** Coordinate reading programs for children, teens and adults at public libraries; partner with organizations to promote, support or develop statewide programs focused on early literacy, grade level reading, and statewide reading; provide training to library staff on the implementation of local reading programs for youth of all ages and abilities; and support book award programs and collection development activities.



**Advancing Equity:** Include materials with a broad range of perspectives, experiences and cultures in collection development, book award, and reading programs; expand summer reading opportunities to underserved populations; provide training and resources to enable librarians to develop more inclusive collections, including support to respond to challenges to intellectual freedom.

**Outcomes:** Rhode Islanders of all ages and abilities will have access to a variety of reading programs across the state to develop, maintain or strengthen reading skills and critical understanding; libraries will increase their capacity to develop, strengthen or expand reading and literacy programs to meet the needs of their communities; Rhode Islanders will have ready access to materials that reflect their own and others' life experiences.

**Partners:** RI Center for the Book, RI Children's Cabinet, RI Department of Education, Rhode Island Library Association, School Librarians of Rhode Island.

**Funding:** LSTA funds will support personnel costs, outside speakers and trainers, program development, and program supplies. State funds will support some personnel costs.

### 2.3: Statewide Programs

**Purpose:** In addition to literacy, Rhode Islanders need skills to participate and succeed in an increasingly digital and complex world. To that end, OLIS will work with partners to develop programs for libraries statewide to address 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies such as digital, financial, health and information literacy and other essential skills.

**Activities:** Partner with state agencies and organizations delivering training to expand access to relevant programs and trainings; identify and affiliate with successful national programs on topics such as digital, financial, health, and information literacy.

**Advancing Equity:** Cultivate partnerships with organizations serving a broad range of populations and communities; collect and utilize data from partners to target higher-need populations and guide programming for those populations.

**Partners:** State agencies, state organizations, and national organizations.

**Outcomes:** Librarians and library staff will have access to training and resources to expand their knowledge and expertise; libraries will have access to established resources and programs to host at their library.

**Funding:** LSTA funds will support personnel costs, outside speakers, program development, and program supplies. State funds will support some personnel costs.

### Goal 3: Engagement

*Empower libraries to be incubators for economic, educational and cultural development, civic discourse, and healthy communities.*

#### 3.1: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

**Purpose:** Library collections, programming, services, and staff should welcome, reflect and be accessible to all members of a community and be responsive to their needs and aspirations.

**Activities:** Work with partnering organizations to lead programs and identify resources to create welcoming and inclusive environments in libraries that minimize linguistic, cultural and other barriers to access and address systemic biases; work with partners to expand diversity in the profession; identify resources, programs, partners, and pathways to digital equity to better meet the needs of underserved groups such as veterans, older adults, individuals with disabilities, minorities, immigrants and refugees, the LGBTQ community, and individuals who are incarcerated or families impacted by incarceration; and build sustainable relationships and expand partnerships to support diverse and inclusive programs and services.

**Outcomes:** Libraries will have tools and knowledge to recruit staff more widely; libraries will have access to resources and organizations that will enable them to expand services and programming to underserved or marginalized groups libraries will have the tools and knowledge to change policies and services that perpetuate systemic inequities; Rhode Islanders will have safe places that are inclusive, welcoming and responsive to their needs.

**Partners:** RI Department of Corrections, RI Office of Diversity, Equity and Opportunity, RI Office of Healthy Aging, RI Department of Veterans Affairs, University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, organizations serving immigrants, refugees, and other marginalized populations.

**Funding:** LSTA funds will support personnel costs, outside speakers, and program supplies. State funds will support some personnel costs.

#### 3.2: Community Connectors

**Purpose:** As the state library agency, OLIS is positioned to build partnerships and identify opportunities for collaboration to support healthy and engaged communities. Working with partners, libraries can better support community needs for social services, adult education, and workforce development, in addition to serving as a community center for civic engagement on social, economic, and environmental issues or cultural programming.

**Activities:** Seek partnerships and collaborate with organizations to expand access to statewide programs in adult education, workforce development, and small business support; identify and promote opportunities for libraries to collaborate with statewide or local social service agencies

to deliver services or resources at libraries; and establish statewide programs with partners on high-interest topics such as climate change or cultural programming.

**Advancing Equity:** Identify organizations serving a broad range of populations and communities for partnership and programming.

**Outcomes:** Libraries will have access to programs to better meet the needs of residents seeking to improve their skills, educational attainment, or business goals; residents will have direct access to services through libraries to support mental health, housing, food and other challenges; libraries will have access to established programs that will support civic discourse and action on issues of local or statewide importance or that provide cultural enrichment.

**Partners:** RI Commerce Corporation, RI Council on the Humanities, RI Department of Education, RI Department of Labor & Training, RI State Council on the Arts, other organizations and academic institutions.

**Funding:** LSTA funds will support personnel costs, outside speakers, and program supplies. State funds will support some personnel costs.

### 3.3: Local Library Development

**Purpose:** OLIS will provide strategic leadership, consultant services, resources, and grants to foster innovation and strengthen library services statewide. Strong libraries can better support education, lifelong learning, community engagement, and cultural enrichment.

**Activities:** Provide consultant services to support and advance youth services, adult services, and library management; collect data, publish analyses, and provide evaluative tools and information; publish online resources such as directories, job postings, news, and events; strengthen library connections through participation in library organizations and networks; provide grants to support innovative projects and programs at libraries; and conduct a systematic program of outreach to libraries to better align project objectives and services.

**Advancing Equity:** Develop statistical analyses of community data and training to enable libraries to understand library usage in their community, including non-use and underserved populations; provide training, tools and resources to support small or under-resourced libraries and boards with strategic planning, policy and program development.

**Outcomes:** Libraries will have access to subject specialists to support program, service and institutional development; libraries and OLIS will have access to accurate and timely data to evaluate services, inform decision-making, and support strategic planning; OLIS will better understand the needs of local libraries and library organizations; libraries will have consistent and clearly communicated leadership to advance library services in the state; Rhode Islanders will have access to interconnected and consistent library services statewide.

**Partners:** Ocean State Libraries, RI Library Association, University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Library and Information Studies.

**Funding:** LSTA funds will support personnel costs and program supplies. State funds will support some personnel costs.

## Project Timelines

Most projects and activities will be conducted over the course of the plan on an ongoing basis (2023-2027). Certain project activities may have specific timelines and finite durations. All projects will be executed in accordance with annual work plans developed by OLIS and subject to availability of resources and funds.

## Coordination Efforts

State Goal	IMLS Focal Area(s)	Associated Project	IMLS Intent
<b>Access:</b> Provide access to library materials and information resources in physical and digital formats for all Rhode Islanders.	Institutional Capacity; Information Access	Resource Sharing	Improve library operations.
		Talking Books Library	Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources.
		Preservation and Digitization	Improve library operations.
<b>Learning:</b> Support the continuing education of librarians, library staff and trustees and the development of statewide programming for the public.	Institutional Capacity; Lifelong Learning	Continuing Education	Improve the library workforce.
		Reading and Literacy	Improve library operations.
		Statewide Programs	Improve users' general knowledge and skills.
<b>Engagement:</b> Empower libraries to be incubators for economic, educational and cultural development, civic discourse, and healthy communities.	Civic Engagement; Economic and Employment Development; Institutional Capacity	Equity, Diversity & Inclusion	Improve users' ability to participate in their community.
		Community Connectors	Improve users' ability to use resources and apply information for employment support.
		Local Library Development	Improve library operations.

## Evaluation Plan

Evaluation of plan goals, projects and activities will be conducted throughout implementation of the Five-Year State Plan through the annual State Program Report to IMLS and by routinely monitoring progress toward project achievement and goal fulfillment. Evaluation will be based on quantitative and qualitative measurements. Outcomes-based assessment will be incorporated to evaluate projects that include public and library staff instruction, content creation, preservation, description, or lending. For sub-grant programs, grantees will be required as appropriate to incorporate outcome-based assessment.

In 2027, OLIS will perform a formal, independent evaluation to measure progress made in meeting the goals set forth in the plan. The evaluation will follow the Guidelines for IMLS Grants to States Five-Year Evaluation and LSTA legislation.

## Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholders were critical contributors to the development of the Five-Year State Plan and will continue to be involved throughout its implementation. The plan was developed with substantial input from the library community through focus groups, surveys and one-on-one interviews conducted by an independent consultant. OLIS observation and interaction with the library community and library organizations provided additional stakeholder input. OLIS staff also actively participated in the development of the plan. Community and OLIS staff feedback were solicited on the draft plan and shaped the final product. The environmental assessment, plan framework and draft plan were reviewed and discussed by the Library Board of Rhode Island at meetings in April and May of 2022; *the final version was approved by the Board on June 13, 2022.*

The Library Board of Rhode Island is broadly representative of library stakeholders, including public, academic, school and special libraries and library advocates, and the general public, including members of the blind and visually impaired community and library users who are economically disadvantaged. The Board sets policy and priorities for library services in Rhode Island and approves all state plans governing library services. The Board, which meets ten times a year, will provide ongoing oversight of the plan. OLIS reports on federal and state funded program activities at each meeting; the Board provides feedback and makes recommendations.

OLIS will continue to involve other stakeholders in its ongoing assessment of plan progress and responsiveness to library needs. Feedback will be gathered regularly through formal meetings convened by OLIS and through informal channels. OLIS staff are actively involved in the library community; the agency holds seats on various boards and steering committees including the public library consortium, the state library association, and the Consortium of RI Academic and Research Libraries, and participates in meetings of other library and related organizations. OLIS also has a systematic program of visiting public libraries, and staff communicate regularly with

all types of libraries about activities and projects. The Talking Books Library gathers community feedback on its services by collaborating with community agencies that serve the blind and print-disabled and conducting regular customer surveys. Rhode Island is a small state with a strong and interconnected library community; OLIS staff are accessible to and present in the library community and people communicate with the agency regularly and freely.

## **Communication and Public Availability**

The Five-Year State Plan will be published on the OLIS website and publicly available at [www.olis.ri.gov](http://www.olis.ri.gov) throughout its implementation; stakeholders will be informed of its availability through email, listservs and social media. The plan will be provided in alternate physical formats on request. Programs and projects supported with LSTA funds will be clearly identified as such in all publications. Plan progress and achievements will be reported on the OLIS website and communicated through standard OLIS distribution channels. OLIS will annually report on plan activities to the State of Rhode Island and the library community.

## **Monitoring**

The Office of Library and Information Services will monitor the progress and outcomes of the Five-Year State Plan on an ongoing basis. The plan will also be monitored through submittal of annual state program and financial reports to IMLS. Any sub-grants awarded will be monitored by OLIS staff in full compliance with LSTA requirements for sub-awards. LSTA program funds will be audited annually in accordance with state accounting procedures by the State of Rhode Island Department of Administration, OLIS' parent organization. OLIS will fully comply with the Code of Federal Regulations 2 C.F.R. 200.327-332.

## **Conclusion**

Rhode Island's libraries stand on the forefront of change as the state emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated socio-economic impacts. While investments in library technology and post-pandemic services using American Rescue Plan Act funding have positioned libraries for success, continued investment in programs and services will be necessary for Rhode Island libraries to fully support access, learning and engagement in their communities. The Office of Library and Information Services will continue to support and lead the library community during this pivotal time to provide opportunities for Rhode Islanders in a rapidly changing and increasingly digital world. Through collaboration, innovative partnerships and a strong vision of libraries as transformative agents, the Office of Library and Information Services will leverage LSTA funds to achieve the objectives of its Five-Year State Plan.