

OLIS Five-Year State Plan: Environmental Analysis

Following is a summary of findings from OLIS' Environmental Analysis conducted by Empower Success Corps (ESC) in March-April, 2022. The Environmental Analysis included a survey completed by 150 individuals from public, school, academic, and special libraries, focus groups attended by 35 individuals, and interviews with eight leaders in the library community in addition to input from OLIS staff. The full report will be available on or before May 16, 2022. All quotes are taken from the work conducted by ESC or from the 2018-2022 Five-Year Plan Evaluation conducted by QualityMetrics, unless noted otherwise.

Additional information is provided to establish the context for the development of OLIS' 2023-2027 Five-Year State Plan.

Community Trends and Challenges

The following trends and challenges were identified as impacting the local community and libraries.

"People are having a tough time navigating today's world."

- **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. 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 on both sides of the political spectrum, increasing intolerance, uncivil behavior, and disinformation.

Library Trends and Challenges

The following trends and challenges were identified as impacting and shaping services at libraries.

"Libraries are supposed to help everyone."

"The divide between wealthy and well supported municipal libraries and libraries in economic crisis serving impoverished communities is growing at an alarming rate and intervention is needed."

- **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 needed, yet the cost of / requirements for professional degrees are barriers to increasing diversity. 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, along 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.

Library Priorities

The following priorities were identified by survey and focus group participants.

“The pandemic has changed the way people engage with brick-and-mortar places. Making sure that our technology and skills are continuing to be effective, and finding ways to teach and reach community members to access the library, even remotely, will continue to be a challenge.”

- **Community.** Strengthen role as community hub to provide resources for learning, culture and cohesiveness. Serve as resource to fill gaps in some social services.
- **Equity.** Provide services beyond the building, provide internet access and technology, remove barriers such as fines, and provide safe space for education and conversation.
- **Collaboration.** Build collaborations with partner organizations to broaden reach.
- **Preparedness.** Become more agile in preparing for unknown future disruptions in operations.
- **Traditional Services.** Continue to provide access to physical materials, programming for youth and adults, and physical space for learning, socializing, and cultural events.

State Priorities (RI 2030)

In October 2021, Governor Dan McKee released [RI 2030](#), a working paper containing preliminary recommendations that serves as a framework and guiding document for the state over the next decade. The paper includes ten topic areas to make RI a more prosperous, equitable and resilient state.

“As Rhode Island emerges from a once-in-a-century public health crisis, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a more resilient, prosperous, and equitable state for all. Making the most of this opportunity will require a collaborative effort to address not only the issues caused by the pandemic, but also those that existed long before.” – Governor Dan McKee and Lt. Governor Sabina Matos

- Support small businesses.
- Invest in children, families and early education.
- Strengthen K-12 education.
- Enhance workforce development and postsecondary education.
- Prioritize housing.
- Drive economic growth.
- Enhance public health and wellness.
- Address climate change.
- Advance infrastructure and transportation.
- Move state government into 2030.

OLIS Services (Priorities Identified by Libraries)

Librarians and library staff rated the importance of the following OLIS services; responses were weighted to develop the following list in priority order.

“I very much appreciate library delivery service, grant in aid, summer reading programming, and professional development opportunities. These ongoing services are vital.”

1. Delivery
2. Formula Grants (non-competitive)
3. Interlibrary Loan
4. Children and Teen Services
5. Competitive Project Grants (for small or large projects)
6. Summer Reading Program
7. Continuing Education
8. AskRI

9. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Programs
10. Adult Services
11. Talking Books Library for the Blind and Print Disabled
12. FirstSearch
13. Disaster and Preservation Planning
14. Discussion groups (roundtables)
15. Consultant or advisory services (for management issues)

OLIS Five-Year State Plan for LSTA Funding: Framework 2023-2027

Vision

Rhode Island libraries inspire and transform lives

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.

OLIS Priorities 2023

1. Access to physical and online materials, including local digitized collections
2. Access to services, especially for those who cannot use standard print materials because of a visual or physical disability
3. Continuing education to support professional development of library staff, managers, and trustees
4. Communities of practice to support and connect library practitioners serving specific populations (e.g., children, teens, adults, rural, urban) and areas of service (e.g., special collections, digitization)
5. Statewide programs to foster reading, textual literacy, and other literacies
6. Partnerships to support adult education, workforce development, health, and well-being
7. Initiatives to support equity, diversity and inclusion in staffing, programming, and collections, and to increase diversity in the library profession
8. Programs to foster local library development, including statistical analysis, data utilization, consultant services, and grants

Summary Library Needs and OLIS Priorities

1. Core Services – access to physical and online materials and supporting services (Needs 1 and 2)
2. Education – professional development for library staff and programming for libraries (Needs 3, 4 and 5)
3. Community Engagement – development of services to support and strengthen community services and libraries (Needs 6, 7 and 8)

Goals

1. **Access.** Facilitate access to library materials and information resources in physical and digital formats.
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

Projects (See Framework 2023 for detail on projects)

Goal 1: Access

- 1.1. Resource Sharing (includes AskRI)
- 1.2. Talking Books Library
- 1.3. Digitization
- 1.4. Preservation and Disaster Preparedness

Goal 2: Learning

- 2.1 Continuing Education
- 2.2 Communities of Practice
- 2.3 Library Management
- 2.4 Reading and Literacy
- 2.5 Statewide Programs

Goal 3: Engagement

- 3.1 Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility
- 3.2 Digital Equity
- 3.3 Community Connectors
- 3.4 Local Library Development
- 3.5 Leadership

LSTA Priorities Addressed

LSTA Priorities*	Goal 1: Access	Goal 2: Learning	Goal 3: Engagement
1) expand services for learning and access to information	✓	✓	✓
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 underserved communities	✓	✓	✓
7) develop services that provide all users access to information through local to global networks	✓		
8) carry out other activities consistent with LSTA purposes			✓

* LSTA priorities are paraphrased.