

# ALA American Library Association

January 24, 2012

In considering how to promote digital literacy, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) should consider the most efficient and cost-effective method for delivering available funds to U.S. public libraries. The American Library Association (ALA) proposes that the FCC work with the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to oversee a digital literacy program for libraries.

IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries. IMLS' new strategic plan (2012-2016) envisions a democratic society where communities and individuals thrive with broad public access to knowledge, cultural heritage and lifelong learning. The plan identifies the mission of IMLS to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, learning and civic engagement by providing leadership through research, policy development and grant-making.

IMLS has significant experience and broad reach in leveraging federal funds through formula-based grants to state library agencies and through competitive discretionary grants to libraries and library organizations. For more than 50 years, the Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) [Grants to States Program](#) and its predecessors have supported the delivery of library services in the United States. In FY2011, the agency distributed \$160 million in funds to all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and U.S. territories.

Most recently, IMLS developed "[Building Digital Communities](#)" in response to the FCC National Broadband Plan's call for the agency to provide leadership to libraries and community-based organizations as they improve digital adoption and use. ALA and several state librarians are supportive of developing a program within IMLS to fund digital literacy training resources to public and school libraries that would increase their capacity to support digital literacy programming to their patrons and their communities.

ALA respectfully suggests that the FCC include the following language in the Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that will address using savings from Lifeline and Link Up reforms to increase digital literacy training in libraries and schools:

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries. The mission of IMLS is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, learning and civic engagement by providing leadership through research, policy development and grant-making. The IMLS leverages federal funds through formula-based grants to state library agencies and through competitive discretionary grants to libraries and library organizations. Libraries and Broadband has been one of the agency's areas of strategic focus in recent years.

One option for addressing the digital literacy needs of communities is for the Commission to work with IMLS as a potential partner to distribute funds for digital literacy training to state library agencies and local public, school and tribal libraries. Libraries may be more likely to apply for a new digital literacy training funding opportunity through the IMLS, as opposed to USAC. While about half of all libraries do not participate in the E-rate program, digital literacy programs funded through IMLS are likely to reach a larger number of Americans. We invite parties to comment on the suitability of contributing savings from Lifeline reforms directly to IMLS so that IMLS may award grants to promote digital literacy training through public, school and tribal libraries.

For more information:

**Legislation and budget**

Most activities of the Institute of Museum and Library Services are authorized by Chapter 72 of Title 20 of the U.S. Code: [http://www.imls.gov/about/legislation\\_and\\_budget.aspx](http://www.imls.gov/about/legislation_and_budget.aspx).

FY2012 appropriations request

[http://www.imls.gov/assets/1/workflow\\_staging/AssetManager/978.PDF](http://www.imls.gov/assets/1/workflow_staging/AssetManager/978.PDF)

Thank you for your consideration.

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