

Project Compass Evaluation Report on Findings

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From the onset of the current recession public libraries have recently experienced a significant upswing in usage, especially by users reeling from the impacts of the economy. In response to this trend, WebJunction and the State Library of North Carolina launched Project Compass in 2009 with funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Project Compass sought to offer training and support around workforce issues to state libraries, and to support efforts that raise awareness of libraries as a resource for the unemployed. This report chronicles the activities and accomplishments of the projects and the lessons learned.

Activities

The primary work of Project Compass included four face-to-face summits, one online summit, and the development of an online “Community of Practice.” Through the five summits, 109 participants representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia Public Libraries came together to discuss best practices, share ideas, and to focus on collaborations with non-library entities such as workforce agencies, and partnerships between and among state libraries.

Successes

While the responses of individual participants varied, the project was completed as planned, stated short-term goals were largely met, and progress was made towards realizing long-term goals. Within a very short time horizon, Project Compass saw many successes:

Fostering cross-state communication around workforce and other issues

States were vocal in their appreciation of the opportunity to share ideas and network during the summits. Several participants indicated that the summit was the first time they had seriously considered the role of a state library in this context. More importantly, it laid the foundation for continued communication. Two months after the summits, 39.5% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that since the summit, they have “sought out other state libraries for information and idea sharing.”

Sharing ideas and learning related to collaboration

Each summit included a presentation on collaborations with non-library agencies such as WorkSource or state agencies that address employment and workforce issues. Many participants commented on the usefulness of this content, and several have pursued collaborations in response. Of the 84 face-to-face post-summit survey respondents, 60 agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, “I intend to explore a new partnership opportunity with a non-library organization in the next 1-2 months.”¹ And of the 104 total

¹ The question was not asked of online summit participants.

respondents,² 77% indicated they are “better able to identify non-library organizations that provide direct services and meet similar needs.”

Launching new and strengthening existing projects to address workforce issues

All summit participants were asked to develop a project that addresses the demand for employment-related services in public libraries. This focus on a project development helped direct the learning towards practical applications and has been effective in producing results. Many projects are already underway and several are seeing results.

Laying the groundwork for further training and support of front-line service providers.

Several of the above-mentioned projects address the need to train front-line library staff to better serve community members impacted by the economic and unemployment crises. In addition, IMLS has agreed to fund Project Compass for a second grant, this time to bring training directly to the libraries themselves. This second stage of Project Compass will focus on approximately fifteen states with the highest rates of unemployment in hopes of having the greatest impact.

Exploration of new training approaches

In addition to the four in-person summits, Project Compass held a multi-part online training that delivered the content from the summits in a virtual environment and mimicked the information sharing of the summit in an online space. Much was gleaned regarding the potential for future collaborative online information-sharing for state library staff. In addition, many participants lauded Project Compass for providing an opportunity to turn the spotlight on one specific topic. While conferences and meetings bring some state library staff together at regular intervals, rarely is there such focused concentration on one issue.

Lessons learned

The lofty goals of promoting partnerships and collaborations were met by many summit participants, and along the way many insights were gained that will influence future large-scale projects to ensure more uniform success. While most participants indicated satisfaction with the summits and usefulness of information gained, there were areas for improvement.

Cross-state communication is vital, but barriers exist to formal partnerships

A central strategy of Project Compass was to foster cross-state communication, which it did on many levels, to the great appreciation of participants. An initial objective however was to kindle formal partnerships across state libraries. It quickly became clear though that the diversity in state library systems, their constraints, roles, and funding sources make formal collaborations exceedingly challenging to launch, especially under time constraints.

Diversity of participants may enrich discussion, but also presents challenges

Though Project Compass limited participation almost exclusively to state library staff, the summit participants varied in their experience and familiarity with the topic, and several participants indicated that the information presented was too basic for their needs. Participants included State Librarians, library development consultants, other state library staff, and, in some cases, public library partners. A significant portion of the summits were

² One hundred and four of the 109 participants completed post-summit surveys. Of these, 84 attended a face-to-face summit and 20 completed the online summit. While some questions were asked of all participants, certain questions were unique to each group.

dedicated to a discussion of the nuts and bolts of partnerships and collaborations, but many state librarians indicated that they felt well-informed on the topic from the outset.

Technical difficulties and skill levels impede online communication

The online summit presented challenges. Many individual participants had technical difficulties that got in the way of full participation, and others found it difficult to engage with the material in an online format.

More communication up-front is important to participants.

Many participants indicated that they did not know what to expect when they arrived at the summit. More clarity around the goals, activities, and long-term vision is important and may have prevented some participant dissatisfaction.

BACKGROUND

The recent explosion in library usage spans many areas of library services, and includes a significant increase in the need for assistance in searching and applying for jobs, building job skills, and addressing needs brought to the fore by the economy, such as applying for unemployment insurance and food assistance. This change has affected public libraries in a variety of ways. Libraries have traditionally played a role in workforce development, but the current volume of demand has left some libraries unprepared. At the same time, other systems are struggling to make their services known. As local, state, and federal governments gear up to address the unemployment crisis, libraries are finding a need to raise their profile, both to ensure that job seekers know they are important providers of knowledge and training, and to ensure that libraries are at the table when resources are allocated to address workforce issues.

The IMLS-funded Project Compass Grant was developed in response to these issues. Using the experience of the State Library of North Carolina as a model,³ WebJunction developed this grant to link state libraries with information and ideas that would enhance their ability to offer guidance and support to individual libraries, so that they in turn could expand their services to the unemployed.

By working with state libraries, Project Compass hopes to have a broad reach, and ultimately help prepare individual libraries to provide the unemployed in their community with the information and support they need. With the realization of this long-term goal, libraries would play a key role in enhancing the workforce and addressing unemployment in individual communities. During the grant-writing process and the first few months of Project Compass implementation, the project team identified a number of short-term outcomes that they believed would help to bring about that ultimate goal.

1. State library participants who had not already explored the option would seek to form statewide partnerships or facilitate local library partnerships with agencies that address employment and workforce issues, such as OneStop Career Centers
2. Collaborations would develop between and among state libraries so that ideas and resources would be shared
3. Participants would have access to materials that they could use with constituent libraries in their home states

To facilitate these goals, three primary activities were identified:

1. Offer a series of face-to-face “summits” for staff from state libraries, with the goal of sharing information, ideas, and resources.
2. Produce and promote an online training module that culls the information, ideas, and resources shared and collected during the summits and makes it available to state library staff who are not able to attend the in-person summits.
3. Develop an online “Community of Practice” that allows for ongoing information sharing and communication on issues related to library services in hard times, and the strategies described during the summits.

³ The State Library of North Carolina had previously partnered with their state’s Employment Services Commission and Department of Commerce to hold nine workshops training 300 librarians to provide needed services to unemployed patrons.

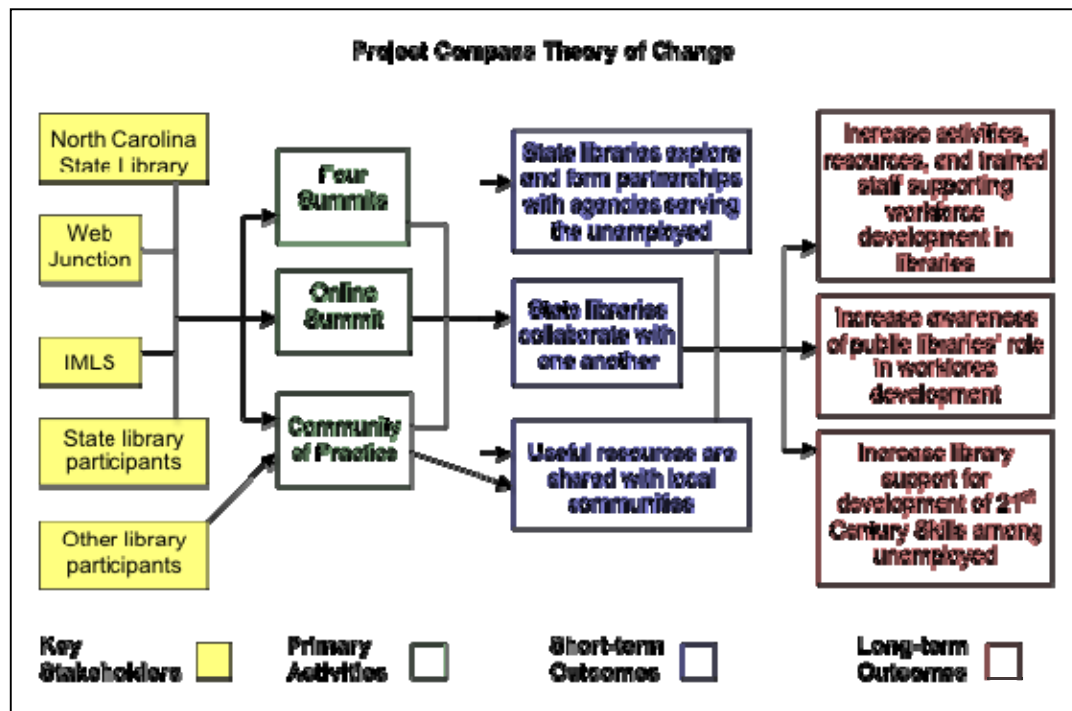
DESIGNING THE PROGRAM EVALUATION

The evaluation of Project Compass began during the first few months of implementation with the drafting of a plan to consider whether planned activities were accomplished satisfactorily, and the extent to which they were effective in achieving the short-term goals identified. With the short time frame the evaluation focuses on activities and short-term outcomes rather than long-term goals, which may take years to fully realize.

This evaluation report includes an analysis of interview and survey data that was gathered from summit participants and project presenters, as well as observation of the external evaluator. Success of the summits, participant satisfaction, and the unanticipated benefits of the project are all touched on in this report, as are suggested improvements for implementation of projects of this kind and lessons learned.

Theory of Change

For the purpose of evaluation, a “Theory of Change” was articulated in late 2009. A Theory of Change (TOC) is a tool that describes a project’s planned actions and underlying assumptions about how the project will lead to useful change. TOCs assist with evaluation by focusing the project around those assumptions, identifying indicators of success, and providing a project map that can be used to quickly and visually describe the steps of the project on which the evaluation will focus.



The boxes above include long-term outcomes, the short time horizon of the project does not allow for an evaluation of long-term outcomes at this time.⁴

⁴ Though it is not visually evident in the TOC, it is important to note that certain actions and short-term outcomes received greater weight than others. For example, the four face-to-face summits represent a much greater expenditure of effort than the one online summit.

Each of the primary activities described above is examined in this report, as are the extents to which the short-term objectives have been met thus far. Within the initial evaluation plan, the following were identified as markers of satisfactory completion of activities and evidence of realization of short-term goals.

- The summit drew the intended audience
- Summits addressed the areas of concern or opportunity that were identified by state libraries during initial webinar meetings
- Peer knowledge-sharing highlighted the strengths of the state libraries already doing work in this area
- Summit participants expressed satisfaction with the content and structure of the summits
- Ideas for collaboration between state libraries were identified and next steps taken
- Participants identified potential statewide partners and learned about best practices for developing partnerships, either at the state or local level
- Participants expressed intention to utilize knowledge gained during the summit in a timely manner and through specific actions
- Participants began these actions within two months of the summit
- State libraries shared the lessons of the summits with libraries in their state
- Summit resources were localized or customized to make them relevant to local users

METHODOLOGY

The primary means of collecting evaluative data on Project Compass was through several rounds of surveys, both paper and electronic. Paper surveys were administered to participants at the end of each face-to-face summit. The post-summit surveys were administered electronically using SurveyMonkey within days of each summit. Of the 109 total participants, 104 completed the survey, a 95% response rate. A follow-on survey was administered two-months later using SurveyMonkey again, this time with 66 respondents or 57%.

In addition, observation and anecdotal information was collected in a variety of ways, including through attendance at one summit, conversations with summit participants, interactions between the evaluator and the planning team, and notes and reports from the planning team.

Data gathering tools			
Tool	Completion time	Format	Purpose
Summit Survey	Last day of summit	In person, paper	1. Assess immediate responses to summits
Post-Summit Survey	Within two weeks of each summit	Online	1. Assess satisfaction with the summit and knowledge gained 2. Describe a specific project that applies the skills, ideas, or resources gained during the summit
Follow-On Survey	Two months after each summit	Online	1. Retention of summit content 2. Application of the skills, ideas, or resources gained during the summit
Observation and anecdotal information	Continuous	In person, through reports	1. Develop understanding of goals, summit successes and pitfalls
Post- Summit Survey Online Summit	Within two weeks of online summit	Online	1. Assess satisfaction with the summit and knowledge gained 2. Assess success of online summit format 3. Describe a specific project that applies the skills, ideas, or resources gained during the summit.
Follow-On Survey Online Summit	Two months after each summit	Online	1. Retention of summit content 2. Application of the skills, ideas, or resources gained during the summit

ACTIVITIES

Project Compass completed the activities it set out to achieve during the one-year time frame. These include a series of face-to-face summits, an online summit, and the development of an ongoing online community of practice that will extend beyond the twelve-month life of this grant. For each of these activities, this report considers whether they were completed *satisfactorily* (i.e. met the requirements of the grant—indicated with “+”) and also whether they were completed *successfully* (i.e. accomplished the goals of the grant—indicated with “++”). In some cases the results have far exceeded the initial standard for “successful completion,” (indicated with “+++”).

Four face-to-face summits and one online summit

Summits exceeded expectations for participation and representation +++

Between the five summits, 109 participants from all 50 states and the District of Columbia participated. Face-to-face summits took place in Atlanta, Portland, Providence, and Denver.⁵ The participants were primarily state library staff, including a large number of library development consultants. The Portland summit was scheduled to coincide with the Western Council of State Libraries meeting and the PLA Conference, allowing several State Librarians to attend. Four state libraries were not able to attend any face-to-face summits due to restrictions on state travel budgets, but in each case a staff person attended the online summit, and in two cases the states were also represented by public library systems at the face-to-face summits. Participation far exceeded the evaluation plan’s indicators of success, which set participation at just 2/3 of state libraries.

Summit focused on areas of concern or opportunity that were identified by state libraries during initial webinar meetings addressed during summits ++

Prior to the summits, Project Compass used an online survey to assess the needs and experiences of state and public libraries as they address the tough economic times. Through this survey five needs emerged: staff training on resources available and on serving patrons in need; easy access resources and training for patrons; cooperation between libraries and other entities serving the unemployed such as state and local workforce agencies; tools for supporting entrepreneurship; and strategies for communicating the value of libraries in tough times, especially in the face of budget cuts.



Each of these themes was touched on in the summits, and the need for staff training, resources, cooperation, and advocacy were especially well covered.

Participants were largely pleased with the summits content and structure ++

Participant feedback was generally very positive. Responses provided through two online surveys and one paper survey⁶ made clear that the content was largely needed and appreciated. Nearly all survey respondents were appreciative of the unique opportunity for

⁵ The Project team initially intended to offer five summits, but quickly decided that four would suffice.

⁶ Paper survey was only distributed to face-to-face summit participants only.

information sharing with peer libraries that the Project Compass summits provided. Many respondents named specific tools or ideas that they will use moving forward, and several commented on the skill of the presenters and facilitators. This was true for both face-to-face summits and the online summit, which was designed to mimic the most successful elements of the face-to-face summits.

“Thank you so much for a great summit and opening my eyes to possibilities!”

“I think the whole summit was great and very well organized. I was engaged the whole time during the summit.”

“This was a very helpful summit for me. I not only gained insight on how I might pursue work in the area of helping libraries respond to unemployment but I was very impressed with the process used. Excellent job.”

“Timing/pace of meeting was well-designed - appropriate mix of group exercises and individual presentation. The NC team was skilled at presenting and engaging the participants. Thank you!”

There were some exceptions. Several participants indicated that the information was too basic for their level of experience. Some were disappointed at the lack of focus on workforce issues, and a few felt the pace was too slow. And while most indicated that they appreciated the emphasis on partnerships and project planning, others felt it was too narrow and not relevant to their situation.

“It had been presented as about workforce development, but it quickly went away from that topic to a wide range of discussion, and it felt disjointed to me. It was too prescriptive as well. The partnership section wasn't very useful to me.”

Several online summit participants experienced technical difficulties that impeded their learning, and some participants of both online and face-to-face summits expressed that they did not know what to expect going in and wished they had been more prepared.

“I was not really sure what would be accomplished by attending this meeting but when we got here it became more clear.”

“From the project description and invitation, I did not have a clear understanding of what the project was about, what the goals of the summits were, and what the expectations were for each state after the conclusion of the summit.”

There was inconsistency in participant satisfaction across the four face-to-face summits. The paper survey presented on the last day of each summit generated varying response. For example, in Atlanta 87% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the summits, “increased my knowledge and skills,” compared to only 50% of Portland summit responders. This discrepancy may be due to the high number of State Librarians at the Portland summit who may have more exposure to ideas presented. In addition, several Portland summit participants were only able to attend one of the two days, which may have impacted the cohesiveness of that particular summit.

Peer knowledge was exchanged +++

During each of the four summits, 2 hours were dedicated to “showcases,” or presentations by each state library on the work they had done to address workforce issues previously. Some states had already launched successful projects and generously shared their knowledge and ideas. This information sharing was the genesis of many of the summit “project” ideas, and when asked, “What did you find most effective about this summit?” a majority of respondents referred to the showcases or other opportunities to learn about peer libraries’ experiences and ideas.

“The showcase slides contain a wealth of information that demonstrate how multifaceted workforce issues are.”

“I really enjoyed all the time given for sharing and the fact that everyone’s ideas were listened to.”

Community of Practice

The Community of Practice is useful and used ++

A Community of Practice is an informal network of peers who share a common interest and work together to create a body of knowledge around that interest. Project Compass has created an online Community of Practice (CoP) that provides a space to capture ideas and information that relate to the project and its goals. Showcase information, best practices, and projects presented or developed during the summits are featured on the CoP, as are ongoing discussions and new opportunities and information. A Twitter hashtag has also been set up on the site, allowing participants to tweet tips and information on to their larger networks.

As of October 1, 2010, The Project Compass CoP had received 4,402 unique page views, and the Workforce Resources CoP had received 10,215. Several state libraries have followed up with links to existing projects and web resources sites. Several CoP members are actively tweeting to the #libs4jobs hashtag, and newly created resources are being collected and shared through the site.

Prior to and during face-to-face and online summits, participants were directed to the CoP and encouraged to use it as a resource and meeting ground. In addition to those 109 participants, the CoP is a format for delivering the information generated or assembled by Project Compass to the larger library community, and invites others to be part of the conversation. Indeed, summit participants may not be the primary users. Two-month follow up surveys indicate that most have visited the site, but few are active users.

How have you made use of the Workforce Resources Community of Practice on WebJunction?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Visited the site.	79.1%	34
Found a useful resource on the site.	37.2%	16
Posted to a discussion topic.	4.7%	2
Added a document to the site.	2.3%	1
Added information to the wiki.	7.0%	3
Used the Twitter hashtag #libs4jobs.	4.7%	2
None of the above.	18.6%	8

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Partnerships

Participants understand the potential benefits of partnership building and intend to explore partnership opportunities further ++

Using the partnership of the State Library of North Carolina and their state’s Department of Commerce as a model, each summit emphasized the potential for creating partnerships with government and nonprofit agencies that address workforce issues. Summits provided time for brainstorming about prospective partner agencies, and described strategies for developing and maintaining successful partnerships.



Several summit participants indicated that this segment of the program was the most useful, and immediately following the summit, 75 out of 109 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that after the summit they are, “better equipped to use collaboration as a tool for developing services and programs.” Eighty-four respondents, or 77.4%, indicated that they agree or strongly agree that, “After participation in this summit I am better able to identify non-library organizations that provide direct services and meet similar needs.” Face-to-face summit participants were also asked about their intentions, and 71.4% or 60 respondents agreed that they intend to explore a new partnership opportunity with a non-library organization in the 1-2 months following the summits.

“One big benefit for me from the Project Compass workshops was the recognition of how State Library level partnerships can benefit local libraries and Kansas residents. I hadn't really examined that potential before but I now clearly see how Library Development can be a part of that.”

After participation in this Summit:	Strongly agree or Agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree	Total respondents
I am better able to identify non-library organizations that provide direct services and meet similar needs.	80	20	4	104
I am better equipped to overcome barriers and pursue successful partnership opportunities.	74	24	5	103
I intend to explore a new partnership opportunity with a non-library organization in the next 1-2 months.	60	17	7	84

Participants have already begun exploring or establishing partnerships +++

As of September 1, 66 individuals had responded to a two-month follow on survey for both the online and face-to-face summits, and of those, 54% or 36 individuals indicated that they had in fact pursued such a partnership opportunity.

“As a result of attending the Project Compass Online Summit I've made contact with the local project manager of Strengthening Communities and have started working on an exciting partnership with that initiative.”

Of those who did not explore new partnerships, many indicated that they are already involved in partnerships to address workforce issues. Others indicated that the short time frame was insufficient and that 12 months is a more appropriate time period for considering new partnerships.

Collaborations between libraries

Participants intend to explore collaboration opportunities with other state libraries

+++

In the designing of Project Compass, the planning team placed a premium on information sharing between state libraries. Participant feedback makes clear the importance of that move. The need for communication and resource sharing is real, and informal collaboration and connection-building was perhaps the most important element of the summits.

Of the 84 people responding to a post summit survey, 84.5% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “After participation in this Summit, I am more likely to seek out other state libraries for information and idea sharing”, and 91.7% agreed that, “bringing state library staff together with facilitators to address a specific issue is very beneficial to me.” Two months after the initial summit, 14 respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, “I have pursued a new collaboration opportunity with a state library,” and 39% indicated that since the summit they have “sought out other state libraries for information and idea sharing.”

“As a result of the Summit, I have several projects that I want to explore with other states.”

State libraries developed collaborations with one another? +

Through the initial needs assessment and several webinars, the Project Compass planning team found that, despite common needs and interests, State Libraries were rarely working in collaboration with one another. Seeing an opportunity for resource-sharing, presenters touched on the theme of cross-state collaboration frequently during their initial presentations. It quickly became apparent, however, that there are concrete reasons that state libraries are not collaborating with one another. These efforts have been made in the past, but because of the great diversity of state libraries, there are many barriers to success. From one state to the next, state libraries have different roles and responsibilities, positions within state government, and funding sources. All of this makes formal collaborations a challenge that extends beyond the capacity of Project Compass to address.

After participation in this Summit: ⁷	Strongly agree or Agree	Neutral	Disagree or Strongly disagree
I am more likely to seek out other state libraries for information and idea sharing.	71	10	3
Bringing state library staff together with facilitators to address a specific issue is very beneficial to me.	77	7	0
I am more likely to work together with other state libraries.	65	15	4
I am better equipped to use collaboration as a tool for developing services and programs.	60	19	4
I intend to explore a new collaboration opportunity with a state library in the next 1-2 months.	41	38	4

Resources and information were shared with local libraries

To what extent did participants express intentions to share the resources with public libraries in their states after the summit? ++

Within a few weeks of the summits, several participants could already describe ways that they had shared the information with their local public libraries, including ideas about partnership-building and the wealth of online resources described by peers during the summits. Best practices and success stories were also shared. Two months following the summit participation, over half of those responding indicated that they had shared ideas or information from the summit with other libraries in their states.

"I did share resources I learned about at the Summit with our regional library systems and posted to our blog about resources."

"Sharing ideas and information from the summit with colleagues around the State of Utah is an ongoing effort. During site visits, phone conversations and email correspondence, State Library staff are emphasizing characteristics of successful 21st century libraries, in particular, collaboration. In the upcoming months, the State Library will be promoting more focused collaboration with the Department of Workforce Services in an effort to better serve our state residents and further our own institutional missions."

"blog posts on various resources, sharing of our webinar series on jobs/resources with other states."

"Conversations with committees at the state library associations for how local libraries can reach out to collaborate within their communities."

"Every chance I get to speak with other public libraries around the state and in our county."

⁷ Data from post-summit survey issued within two weeks of face-to-face surveys.

Two month's later: "Have you shared any of the ideas or information from the summit with the libraries in your state?"		
Yes	56.6%	30
No	37.27%	20
Does not apply	5.7%	3

Several face-to-face summit attendees were so impressed by their experience that they encouraged their local, state or public library colleagues to take part in the online summit. One state has gone so far as to plan a replication of the summit for its constituent libraries. This is testament to the value of the summit format. From the early planning stages of the grant, Project Compass organizers intended for the information to reach individual librarians directly. Initially there was discussion of creating a "train the trainer" curriculum that state libraries could use to transmit the learning to local libraries. The Community of Practice serves this purpose to some degree, and has the added benefit of accessibility, but the rich dialogue that the summits promote is not easily replicated. Fortunately, Project Compass' recently-funded stage two will provide this face-to-face training opportunity for many librarians in the states that have been identified as having the highest need.⁸

⁸ An estimated 12-20 states that will receive intensive and in-person training through this grant. Other states will have limited training opportunities as well.

Additional Benefits

This evaluation has been focused on the specific short-term outcomes articulated during the evaluation-planning phase of this project. Not surprisingly, Project Compass' successes have extended beyond this narrow focus with additional benefits, some anticipated and some unforeseen.

Drawing new attention to workforce issues in libraries

Project Compass has been successful in focusing state libraries nationwide on issues related to workforce development. By bringing representatives from every state together to discuss the workforce issues, the role of the state library in addressing those issues, and new and proven strategies for addressing them, Project Compass established unemployment as a key concern for all state libraries. While many states had already begun these discussions and projects, some were doing so in a vacuum, and several indicated that the summit was the first time they had seriously considered the role of a state library in addressing these issues.

"The summit motivated me to focus and develop a strategy to provide public libraries with the tools needed for job search and employment."

"The shared experience not only re-energizes it allows us a rare opportunity to focus our attention on formulating objectives and actions attached to them!!!"

"Hands-on exercises and pooling of current resources and ideas was extremely helpful to provide forward momentum for our state planning. Terrific event - motivating and useful. Thank you!"

Maximizing the success of collaboration and networking

Project Compass was developed around the assumption that there is great value in bringing state libraries together, and the participant feedback has born that assumption out. Beyond this, however, summits Participants articulated two specific ways that the Project Compass model created a particularly useful and unique space for sharing best practices.

While State Librarians do have opportunities to meet (through meetings like COSLA – the Coalition of State Library Agencies), state library staff are less likely to have such opportunities. It was valuable for this second tier of stakeholders to meet and share ideas and information.

"Library Development staff personnel very rarely have the opportunity to interact (unlike our state librarians, we do not have an organization...). This workshop really gave us a gauge of what other states are doing. Thanks for a well-coordinated session."

In addition, the opportunity to come together for two days to brainstorm around a single issue guaranteed useful dialog and a degree of follow-through that may not have been achieved if the topic were dealt with in a 2-hour conference program, for example. While conferences and meetings bring some state library staff together at regular intervals, rarely is there such focused concentration on one issue.

“Concentrating on a specific topic provides the focus needed to gain useful and important information. It’s amazing what so many do with such minimal resources.”

“I am amazed at the way an issue approached by a multi-area or multi-focused group can really expand the possibilities of working on the issue. “

“The Summit was especially helpful by bringing librarians together with the same issues and giving us a specific and uninterrupted time period to assist one another with this issue.”

If I hadn't attended Project Compass, I wouldn't have realized that our state library was so far behind in workforce recovery efforts! We will now try to make up for lost time. (online)

Exploration of new training approaches

Project Compass held a multi-part online summit that delivered the content from the summits in a virtual environment, and mimicked the information sharing of the summit in an online space. This experience shed a lot of light on the potential for future collaborative online information-sharing for state library staff.

“What I like about [the] online [summit] is that people from across the country participate and it is not just peers from neighboring states/region. Those are the folks you are more inclined to contact, pick their brain whenever needed.”

Launching new and strengthening existing projects to address workforce issues

During each summit, time was dedicated to the development of new projects. All participants were encouraged to plan projects that addressed the impact of the economic downturn on their constituents. Several states have used this opportunity to launch a new project or to enhance a current project. Projects vary in their focus, but several topic themes emerged when participants were asked to describe their projects:

- Development of web portals to support local libraries in serving patrons addressing economic hard times
“Creating a website that county libraries systems will be able to contribute to that will provides access to employment information as well as other supports for the unemployed (food, housing, heating oil, etc.)”
- Collaboration with non-library agencies that support employment and workforce development, either at the state or local level.

“Collaboration with state labor department to offer informational and training programs in public libraries.”

“Establish a program that can be easily implemented state-wide that will offer a template for libraries looking to collaborate with community partners to increase assistance to entrepreneurs and facilitate new small businesses in our state.”

- Promotion and fund development efforts that seek to raise the profile of public libraries among government and private stakeholders, especially with respect to the role of libraries in supporting workforce development.

“Explore new library funding from non-traditional sources, such as corporate sponsors”

“Establishing libraries as critical in the minds of elected officials, heads of agencies, and citizens.”

- Library staff training opportunities geared towards serving patrons, promoting library resources, and partnering with local workforce-related agencies.

“My project was a day-long seminar on Workforce Development, using a model that we created for Small Business Services.”

- New resources, including the creation of tools or purchase of databases for use by public libraries.

“Develop a librarian’s toolkit to help librarians use existing resources and avoid reinventing the wheel.”

Not all participants pursued a new project. Some states had already accomplished a great deal, others built upon existing projects, most notably, the pursuit of funding through the federal Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). However, several have moved forward to address the economic and unemployment realities of communities, and are already seeing successes.

Since attending the Summit.. ⁹	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
• I have identified new non-library organizations with which to network.	14	19	11	7	2
• I have pursued a new partnership opportunity with a non-library organization.	13	16	10	13	1
• I have sought out other state libraries for information and idea sharing.	4	17	12	17	3
• I have pursued a new collaboration opportunity with a state library.	5	5	18	19	3

Laying the groundwork for further training and support of front-line service providers. A goal of the grant was to reach individual libraries and staff with the learning gained through the summits and Community of Practice. This outreach has already begun, and will continue in earnest. The Project Compass team has secured a follow-on grant that will provide intensive training to public library staff in the states with the highest unemployment rates.

⁹ Data from 2-mont follow on survey of face-to-face summit participants.