

Public Libraries and Community Outreach:

**Program assessment for serving
homeless patrons**

PAMELA FOSTER

Table of Contents

- About this paper..... 4
- Introduction: Libraries as Community-Serving, Public Institutions..... 5**
- Who are the homeless? A Snapshot of Minnesota 7**
- Homelessness and Public Libraries 10**
- Homeless Information Needs 11**
- Library Partnerships and Outreach 12**
 - San Francisco: State Agency Partnerships 13
 - Washington, D.C.: Community Partnerships 14
 - San Jose: Institutional Partnerships 15
 - Other Creative Library Outreach Efforts 16
- Survey of Current Practices..... 17**
- Survey Methodology..... 18**
- Survey Findings..... 19**
 - Program Focus 20
 - Resource Commitment 22
 - Program Measurement..... 23
- Measuring Social Impacts 24**
- Limitations Associated with Measuring Social Impacts..... 26**
 - Lack of expertise: 27
 - Lack of resources: 27
 - Late-stage evaluation:..... 27
 - Lack of laws and regularities:..... 27
 - Disagreement regarding desired outcomes..... 28
 - Social value metrics are unreliable: 28
 - Time value calculations:..... 28
 - Inconsistent use of language: 28
 - Lack of common measures in social sector: 28
 - Lack of quality data: 29
 - Lack of incentives for transparency: 29
 - Unintended consequences: 29
 - Inadequate utilization: 29

- Cost of measurement: 29
- Social Value Assessment Tools and Methodologies for Libraries 29**
- Logic Models..... 30**
- Program Evaluations 33**
 - Formative evaluations: 35
 - Process/Implementation evaluations: 35
 - Outcomes/Effectiveness evaluations: 35
 - Impact evaluations:..... 35
 - Describing rationale and purpose of the evaluation. 36
 - Developing a logic model for the evaluation 36
 - Identify the evaluation stakeholders: 37
 - Determining the evaluation’s key questions: 37
 - Determining the evaluation’s underlying assumptions: 38
 - Determining the evaluation’s external factors. 39
- Conclusions and Recommendations:..... 39**
 - Agree on consistent measurement terms and scales among partners. 42
 - Only collect data you will use. 42
 - Seek an experienced evaluator 42
 - Involve stakeholders and evaluators early in the process..... 43
 - Institutional commitment is key 43
- REFERENCES..... 44**

Tables:

- Table 1: Summary of public library community engagement survey results.....21
- Table 2: Program logic model example for public libraries and homeless patron outreach programs.....32
- Table 3: Top Ten Reasons Evaluation is Neglected.....34
- Table 4: Types and Uses of Evaluation.....36

Figures:

- Figure 1: Theory of Change model for public libraries and homeless patron outreach programs.....31

About this paper

As public libraries seek to expand their services “beyond books” in the new digital age, libraries have found themselves seeking innovative ideas when it comes to public outreach and looking for new opportunities to serve their communities. The library has always been seen as a democratic institution and a community resource that, at the heart of its core values, has the duty and capacity to provide free access to information without prejudice. As such, public libraries have begun to recognize the needs of those patrons who frequent the library and who may be in need of additional services due to housing insecurity or other difficulties such as physical or mental health issues.

A number of U.S. and Canadian libraries have recently begun to address the issues of patrons in need of specialized services by partnering with community organizations, providing resource materials, and hiring social or public health workers to help address their needs. This paper will discuss the current issues libraries face in serving special populations by focusing on homeless patrons. It will examine how different libraries across the U.S. and Canada are using public outreach to engage staff, the community, and homeless patrons, and discuss the different tools and methods libraries may use to measure the impacts their outreach efforts. The paper also contributes a logic model and evaluation framework (using outreach to homeless patrons as an example) in order to help public libraries visualize how to measure the social impacts their programs.

Introduction: Libraries as Community-Serving, Public Institutions

“Libraries are not just places you go for help; you go there for hope.”

--Holt and Holt, 2010--

As public libraries look for ways to remain relevant in the ever-changing digital age, it should come as no surprise that they are also seeking progressive ways to become more engaged and pronounced in their communities. The advent of the internet and other technologies over the past two decades has forced momentous changes upon the traditional library model causing a paradigm shift in the long-standing imprint of the library’s function in society. This shift has opened the door for public libraries to expand their customary tasks as expert information providers and enabled libraries to embrace the multiplicity of services that they have the capacity to offer their communities.

Libraries are highly respected public institutions that have always supported a wide variety of needs and services to its community members. Connecting people with information is at the core of its mission but its actual influence on the community is much greater. As a knowledgeable citizenry is the foundation of an effective democracy, the libraries serve as fundamental agents of social change by providing free and open access to information for all people without prejudice. The confluence of the library’s shifting focus from its narrow concentration on audience development to innovative ideas of how to decrease disparities of literacy among its homeless citizens, appears to have rekindled some of the public library’s social responsibility “movement” of the 1960’s. Idealism was at the heart of the movement

which encouraged libraries to be participants in important causes such as providing specialized services for the disadvantaged, collaborating with other social agencies, ethical stances on social or political issues, and meaningful defense of intellectual freedom and its practitioners (Curley, 1974).

Public libraries *are* the social pulse of the communities in which they are found. They have a rich knowledge base of what is happening in their communities due to their distribution, non-biased reputation, and free access to information which attracts local residents. Public libraries also have the ability to draw on their trademark reputation, their close ties to their communities, and the particular resources they offer, to shape and encourage strong connections for engagement and action. In fact, public libraries are in a remarkable position to provide the sustained and consistent leadership that contributes to a community's success by supporting community priorities and working in close partnerships with community leaders (Urban Library Council, 2016).

A number of libraries have undertaken initiatives to create unique outreach programs beyond the scope of traditional library services for groups with particular needs. In 2009 and 2010, the U.S. economy suffered the greatest job loss in the postwar era. Job seekers of all ages had difficulty finding work, millions got discouraged and quit looking for work, and unemployment periods lasted longer than at any time on record (Stanford, 2015). Public libraries provided an especially critical community role during these tough economic times by providing a variety of free resources and instruction to assist patrons during the job hunt.

However, five years later, employment still lags far behind its pre-recession level. It is due to this economic downturn that many people began to experience housing insecurity and many became homeless. (Stanford, 2015) The problem is not just an urban issue (however most

of the public services are located in larger cities) but also prevalent in rural and suburban communities (Wilder Research, 2013). In Minnesota, there are 141 libraries with 356 branches throughout the state (MN Dept. of Education, 2014). 30 of the public libraries are located in Twin Cities (MELSA, 2016).

The focus of this paper is evaluating service for homeless patrons. The libraries have always served as a haven for those experiencing homelessness but, more recently, these institutions have started realizing the unique position they are in to serve their communities to a greater level (Huffington, 2016). The Central Library in Minneapolis, MN is one of a growing number of libraries across the U.S. that has expanded its efforts to reach out and directly help its patrons who are experiencing homelessness. The analysis and tools in this paper address a request from the Minnesota State Libraries to assist public libraries to better serve and evaluate community outreach efforts. This paper will focus on library services for those experiencing homelessness. The first step in understanding the varied information and service needs of this segment of the population requires recognizing that there are many paths to homelessness.

Who are the homeless? A Snapshot of Minnesota

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation has been studying the homeless populations (those who lack fixed, regular, and adequate housing) in Minnesota for over 30 years by conducting a statewide study every three years to better understand the prevalence, causes, conditions, and effects of homelessness. According to the most recent 2012 Wilder Research study, there are over 10,000 people that are homeless on any given night in Minnesota (Wilder Research Fact Sheet, 2012).

Additionally, the 2012 Wilder Research study estimates that nearly 40,000 Minnesotans experience homelessness at least once over the course of a full year. This includes:

- 16,900 adults age 22 or older
- 3,900 young adults ages 18-21 on their own
- 5,100 minor youth (ages 17 or younger) on their own
- 13,900 children with their homeless parents

Reasons for homelessness tend to be variable depending on whether being without shelter is a short-term or chronic situation. Situational homelessness can occur when someone experiences a crisis event such as loss of a job, eviction, and health or financial difficulties. Episodic homelessness often stems from behavioral patterns such as depression or domestic violence and is more common among women and families (Ruhmann, 2014). Those people experiencing long-term homelessness often have to cope with multiple issues:

- 60% of long-term homeless adults have a serious mental illness, compared to 49% of other homeless adults
- 54% have a chronic health condition, compared to 48% of other homeless adults
- 26% have a substance abuse disorder diagnosis, compared to 17% of other homeless adults

□ 48% have a condition that limits the kind or amount of work they are able to do, compared to 37% of other homeless adults (Wilder Research, 2013)

Even for the homeless who do not have persistent mental, chemical, or physical barriers, there are fundamental issues with the availability and affordability of housing. Many people now experiencing homelessness were considered the “working poor” and struggled to afford the basic living essential such as food, medical care, and other necessities prior to the onset of events that led to the loss of housing. Millions of people in the U.S. are living at or below the poverty level and are only a paycheck or crisis away from becoming homeless (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2015)

Additionally, the private housing market often exceeds the financial means of many low-income people. When homeless people were surveyed as to why they left their last regular housing, the most common answer was the inability to afford house or rent payments (38%) followed by loss of job or work hours (32%) as the second most common reason (Wilder Research, 2013). These two significant events add up to nearly three-quarters of those experiencing homelessness occurring because of the lack of availability or affordable housing and/or insufficient income due to lack of employment.

After considering the statistics as to how and why people become homeless, the subsequent consensus of *who* comprises the homeless population is found to be complex and varied. It is therefore important to emphasize that there are many factors that make up a person’s identity and though there are common difficulties that all homeless people face, people that are experiencing homelessness consist of a very diverse population with very diverse needs.

Homelessness and Public Libraries

For those experiencing homelessness, libraries are often attractive places because they are public spaces that offer free access to services, are centrally-located, quiet, and safe. Numerous homeless people residing in shelters are also drawn to the library because they often have no place to go during the day and want to escape from the elements, especially in the winter. According to David Jeffries, director of the single-adult program at St. Stephens Human Services in Minneapolis, around 300-400 homeless people visit the Central Library on a daily basis. Betsy Williams, the manager for the Minneapolis Central Library, expands on Jeffries account that a “preponderance” of the visitors to the Central Library each year are the “poor and under-served” (StarTribune, 2013).

Such a large, daily influx of homeless people at urban libraries has not occurred without problems. Complaints from other patrons using the library encompass a wide range of issues. Most common grievances include: being too loud, sleeping, excessive body odor, exhibiting mental illness, bathing in restrooms, having too many bags, or monopolizing the computers (Reuters, 2014). Some libraries have enacted stricter policies or added additional security but these efforts have raised questions regarding the legal and ethical basis of limiting access to library resources due to housing status or mental illness. Additionally, one of the library’s fundamental values is to be equitable in an effort to improve the literacy of those that are poor and marginalized so that they may be empowered.

Homeless Information Needs

People experiencing homelessness, like other library patrons, have a genuine need to access information on news, healthcare, legal matters, employment, childcare, housing, transportation, education and other essential communications. Public libraries therefore offer a crucial resource for many homeless or underprivileged users by providing free information and electronic access to those who cannot afford computers or internet services (Wong, 2009). According to the Associated Press, nearly two-thirds of libraries provide the only free computer and internet access in their communities (Huffington, 2016) Additionally, while some government service providers may still offer printed materials, most agencies are directing people to the internet to complete forms and find updated information regarding programs, jobs opportunities, and other services. This ability to connect to the internet is essential in today's society as nearly all applications and other business communications are now almost exclusively completed online.

A 2012 study by Angie Kelleher interviewed 121 homeless people in central Michigan shelters, transitional housing, and other agencies, to understand what library services were useful to homeless patrons. The majority of respondents (58%) reported that they used libraries to read for entertainment. Other important services included the use of the internet to look up information (38%) and using the internet to correspond with people (34%). Thirteen of the respondents reported that they did not use the library at all for the following reasons: the library had no materials that interested them, they didn't feel welcome, or they owed fees/fines (Kelleher, 2012). The American Library Association's 1990's *Policy 61* makes several recommendations as to the library's treatment of the poor such as removing barriers to accessing

services, improving services to the poor, and educating staff with regard to the needs of the poor and homeless (Kelleher, 2012).

There are times when those experiencing homelessness may have more urgent needs that are beyond the scope of the public library services or the ability of the librarians to accommodate patrons. Many libraries provide information assistance in the form of printed materials where homeless people can get the essential services they need such as food, shelter, medical attention, showers, clothing, childcare, transportation, etc. (Holt & Holt, 2010). Another option is to direct the person in need to the Essential Community Services information line (2-1-1) which is available in most areas throughout the U.S. in order to be quickly routed to local services. Dialing 211 can assist those experiencing homelessness but is also intended to provide information to aid the elderly, the disabled, those who do not speak English, those who are having a personal crisis, those who have limited reading skills, or those who are new to their communities, among others (FCC, 2015).

Library Partnerships and Outreach

Proactive solutions to larger community problems such as homelessness often involve greater community involvement by the library. Libraries provide a distinctive venue for community outreach services for special populations like those experiencing housing insecurity. While there are some library staff who say that they are “not social workers”, in fact, the library has been serving in a similar social capacity since its inception. The cultural acclimation of immigrants at the turn of the century, information services to help WWI veterans returning home, families stricken by poverty following the Great Depression, addressing race equality

issues, and more recently, support for the homeless, provide a preview of the social outreach libraries have been providing their communities for decades (Westbrook, 2015).

Many public libraries, however, recognize that they are not fully equipped with the knowledge, staff, or resources, to deal with the complex and often personal needs associated with homeless patrons. Several public libraries across the U.S. and Canada have addressed the situation with creative and practical solutions like partnering with community groups and other agencies that work closely with those experiencing homelessness and who have experience navigating the multitude of public services available for those in need. These libraries are bringing services in-house, where the homeless people come, to actively promote essential services. The following three examples of library collaborations provide an overview of the types of community partnerships that libraries have created to combine resources and knowledge across sectors to realize their outreach goals.

[San Francisco: State Agency Partnerships](#)

The San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) was the first public library in the nation to address the issue of homelessness by hiring an in-house social worker in 2009. The number of people in San Francisco experiencing homelessness is significant as it is estimated that there are more than 7000 people in the city without permanent housing. Of those, approximately 15% visit the library on a daily basis (PBS Newshour, 2015). It was a reality that the SFPL could not ignore.

The library hired a social worker (technically a licensed marriage and family therapist) through a partnership between SFPL and the San Francisco Department of Health's Homeless Outreach Team (Blank, 2016). Since 2009, nearly 150 formerly homeless patrons have acquired permanent housing and another 800 have been connected to social services (Wise, 2015). In fact,

the SFPL program has been so successful that twenty-four other libraries across the nation are implementing their own outreach programs using in-house health or social workers based on the SFPL's approach (Citylab, 2016).

The outreach staff at SFPL has grown from one full time social worker to include six part-time Health and Safety Associates (HASA) and three team leaders. HASAs are formerly homeless patrons that have undertaken a 12-week vocational rehabilitation program (Foster, 2016). They are then employed by the library to monitor the floors, hallways, and bathrooms, seeking out other patrons in need and connecting them with information about local social services. HASAs are a valuable resource to the library's outreach program because they understand the difficulties of housing insecurity and can identify with and develop trust with homeless patrons to get them the services they need (Blank, 2016). Some HASAs have used the vocational training and employment with the library to transition from being on the streets to returning to school or finding full time employment. The SPFL team leaders have education or training in social work and help conduct public outreach by travelling to different library locations and providing information on library services (Esquerra, 2016).

[Washington, D.C.: Community Partnerships](#)

Another creative approach to addressing the issue of homelessness in public libraries has been fashioned at the Martin Luther King Jr. library in Washington, D.C. by the hiring of a Human Services Coordinator (HSC). While the HSC is a licensed social worker (MSW), the role is not simply to provide one-on-one counseling services but rather to develop system-wide partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies to coordinate services for those experiencing homelessness (Nemec-Loise, 2014). Staff training is also a large part of the HSC position which includes education about homelessness issues and crisis management in order to

empower staff and help them feel comfortable assisting those in need of non-traditional services (Pamias, 2015).

The library's HSC has created partnerships with community organizations such as Pathways to Housing DC, Neighborhood Legal Services Program (NLSP), and U.S. Vets. It is the community organizations that do much of the outreach and provide office hours to meet with homeless patrons and the library provides a neutral, non-clinical setting for the consultations to take place. The homeless outreach programs work alongside the NLSP program to provide a wider range of services for patrons. To keep costs down, the social workers and lawyers are volunteers and provide 20-minute consultations one day per month. The legal services program tends to focus its limited resources on those problems that low-income people experience that are most debilitating and most difficult to overcome without an advocate such as wrongful eviction, child support, conflict family law, etc. (Pamias, 2015).

San Jose: Institutional Partnerships

The San Jose Public Library (SJPL) initiated the creation of the Social Workers in the Library (SWITL) program which partners the King Library with the San Jose State University's (SJSU) School of Social Work and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) California chapter. The King Library is situated on the campus of SJSU and is unique in that it is a joint-use library that serves the general public and the academic community of the university. The location provides easy access for joint collaboration between the library and the School of Social Work. SWITL seeks to provide services to all users in need, not just the homeless. (Lilienthal, 2011). SWITL was created as a collaborative effort to give back to the community while also adding another dimension to the SJSU's social work degree program. Volunteer social

workers provide the majority of consultation services but the MSW graduate students play a large supporting role in the program (Malai, 2012).

As the public library is often the first place vulnerable populations (no/low income, elderly, poorly educated, minorities) go for information, the program has been very beneficial. The SWITL program has helped patrons with a wide range of issues including adoption, foster care, stress, grief, unemployment, homelessness, and substance abuse recovery. Services are provided in both English and Spanish and library staff participate by promoting programs, facilitating services, and providing supplemental information. Grant funding through the SJSU College of Applied Sciences and Arts supported a study to determine the efficacy and possible expansion of the program. In brief, the results of the research show that overall the program has been beneficial and professional with improvements needed in program promotion, staff awareness, community outreach, program expansion, and administrative enhancements (Luo, et. al, 2012).

Other Creative Library Outreach Efforts

Many other public libraries have looked for creative ways to have greater community impact, such as Coffee and Conversation (offered by the Dallas and Minneapolis public libraries), which encourages mingling between the public, library staff, and those experiencing homelessness in an effort to “put a face” on homelessness and encourage personal connections through dialogue. Pima County (AZ) Public Libraries have public health nurses (PHN) that visit branches regularly. PHNs not only provide basic first aid and referrals (PBS, 2015) but also communicate health promotion, disease prevention, and health education (Johnson, et.al. 2014). The Denver Public Library provides public outreach and help through the library’s Community Technology Center which not only provides patrons with technology help but also dispatches a

team that visits homeless day shelters regularly to provide instruction in job interviewing techniques and technology training (Blank, 2016). The City Library in Salt Lake City, UT combined service providers, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and private sector partners all together in an information resource fair where people at risk could be connected to a variety of services (Cortez, 2014). This is not an exhaustive list of all the services public libraries provide to those in the community requiring additional help, but rather it demonstrates the multitude of ways libraries can reach out and have a positive impact in their communities if people are willing to invest the time to seek out ways to maximize resources through community partnerships.

Survey of Current Practices

One objective of this paper was to determine how libraries that are currently conducting public outreach programs are measuring their impact on the community. A survey was created to obtain program information from those libraries who were actively participating in outreach programs intended to benefit those experiencing homelessness. An initial request was either sent by email or by phone call to inquire if the recipient would mind filling out a “short-survey” to ten public libraries. The survey was designed to explore three areas of effort: community outreach, the level of resources committed to the programs, and how programs were being measured for social impact, if at all. Ten public libraries were contacted and seven responded by completing the survey which includes two interviews (one phone, one in-person) conducted in place of the written surveys. Three recipients did not reply.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This study was exploratory and used qualitative methodology to obtain and analyze data to inform this study. An open-ended questionnaire was sent to preselected representatives at public libraries across the U.S. and Canada that have active outreach programs for those experiencing homelessness. Representatives were chosen by reviewing the available information found on internet searches (Google, Google Scholar, UMN Libraries MNCAT Discovery, Academic Search Primer) using search terms as “libraries and the homeless,” “social workers and libraries,” “libraries and community outreach,” “public health outreach and libraries,” and through references in books and related materials.

Open ended questionnaires allow respondents to provide unstructured answers that are in the responders own words and sets no limits as to the length of the response. The survey questions were standardized as presented in a prearranged and consistent format to all representatives. The number of survey items was limited to nine (3 questions in each category) so as to increase overall participation response and in anticipation of more in-depth replies. If contact information was available, the recipient was contacted prior to receiving the survey so as to further increase response rates. The order of the survey items was also considered as the questions were organized in three areas: program focus, resource commitment, and program measurement. The study also included semi-structured interviews with two public librarians from the Minneapolis Central Library that have participated in programs and partnerships that reach out to homeless patrons, and one phone interview with an out-state library representative that replaced the written surveys.

Due to the small number of survey respondents (seven), this survey study is not statistically significant. However, the questions of the survey were designed to answer the aims of the paper and the responses inform the tools and recommendations that follow. The results of the survey were not coded but answers were studied for patterns and commonalities as it relates to social value measurements to inform the research.

Additionally, the study included a literature review of information related to issues of those experiencing housing insecurity in Minnesota. A broad literature review of program measures was also conducted using the search terms “social value measurement,” “measuring community outreach efforts,” “social impact measurements,” “community impact measurements,” “measuring social outcomes,” and related searches to find as much information as possible on this relatively nascent and variable subject.

Survey Findings

Survey findings from the interviews, program documents, and other literature are summarized in Table 1. The following narrative highlights some of the key findings.

Program Focus

Each of the seven libraries that responded to the survey had active community outreach programs but only five of the libraries have MSWs on-site. The Dallas Public Library did not have an outreach program that focused exclusively on connecting homelessness patrons with services but rather connecting homeless people with the community (Coffee & Conversation). The Sacramento Public Library contracted exclusively with a non-profit organization aimed at helping the homeless and library staff were not actively part of the outreach process except to let the “navigators” know where to find people that may need social services.

All of the libraries responded either explicitly or implicitly that reducing barriers to service was a major objective of their outreach programs and five out of seven felt that staff training was an essential part of program goals.

Table 1. Summary of public library community engagement survey results

Table 1	Edmonton	Sacramento	Kansas City	Denver	Minneapolis	Dallas	San Francisco
Program Focus	<p>Community engagement & outreach through internal staff and external partnerships</p> <p>Program development based on community needs</p> <p>Reduce barriers/equity of service</p>	<p>Active homeless outreach through external partners contract</p> <p>Equity of service for all patrons</p> <p>Reduce behavioral issues by getting patrons services they need</p>	<p>Advocacy for underserved</p> <p>Reduce barriers/equity of service</p> <p>Promote resources to non-users</p>	<p>Active homeless outreach program</p> <p>Staff training</p> <p>Improve staff/patron interactions—reduce crisis situations</p>	<p>Active homeless outreach/programs</p> <p>MSW at downtown location to connect homeless with services</p> <p>Remove barriers/equity of service</p> <p>Staff training</p>	<p>Active community outreach program but not homeless outreach</p> <p>Active Homeless engagement (Coffee & Conversation)</p> <p>Staff training</p>	<p>Active homeless outreach program</p> <p>Reduce barriers/equity of service</p> <p>Provide workforce rehabilitation training for formerly homeless</p> <p>Staff training</p>
Resource Commitment	<p>All staff are expected to be involved in community-led efforts</p> <p><u>Managers</u>—leadership & direction</p> <p><u>Community librarians</u>—primary contacts with partners (>70% time)</p> <p><u>Library assistants</u>—outreach programs</p> <p><u>Other staff</u>—building relationships with patrons</p>	<p>Staff/security make connections but external partners do the outreach</p>	<p>1-FTE MSW</p> <p>4.5 FTE library outreach services (books to go, immigrant services etc.)</p> <p>3-Summer interns work directly underserved to build library capacity for outreach</p> <p>Connect with community partners to provide outreach services</p>	<p>2-MSW Community Resource Specialists (CRS) outreach and staff support</p> <p>2 volunteers/2 days/wk</p> <p>CRS conduct active outreach within library</p> <p>No current community partnerships</p>	<p>Resource commitment greater when grant was in place—Director, project manager, community partnerships</p> <p>Current commitment—FT MSW at downtown loc.</p> <p>Coffee & conversation</p> <p>Teen Tech</p> <p>Shelter collections</p>	<p>Managers must commit 5hr/wk</p> <p>Staff get to choose which areas they are comfortable participating in outreach</p> <p>All 28 branches participate in outreach</p>	<p>1 FT MSW</p> <p>1 PT (30 hr/wk) Team Leader</p> <p>6 PT HASAs (15-20 hr/wk)</p> <p>Program is expanding to 3 other branches</p>
Program Measurement	<p>Time audits for managers and librarians on time spent on outreach</p> <p>Evidence based decision-making tools</p> <p>Evaluations/continuous improvement</p> <p>Objectives-based outcome evaluation with community partners</p> <p>Feedback: Interviews with community partners, staff surveys</p>	<p>External partners send monthly report regarding # individuals served & resources provided</p> <p>Feedback: Patron comment cards</p>	<p>No measurable objectives—working on strategic planning</p> <p>Advisory group (community members, library staff, service agencies)</p> <p>Intermittent surveys</p> <p>Outside vendor to conduct outcomes measure for grant-funded program (money matters). Pre/post surveys.</p>	<p>CSRs count encounters, services provided, & demographics</p> <p>Feedback: staff, customer cards</p>	<p>Volunteer to measure homeless resource connections during grant</p> <p>Staff training—pre/post survey</p> <p>Youth program—community org did longitudinal study</p> <p>Grant program created assessment toolkit to measure outcomes</p>	<p>1 Community survey/year</p> <p>Measurements not currently being done on programs</p> <p>1-time community partner collected data after event</p> <p>Internal spreadsheet logs all community visits</p> <p>Feedback: staff survey and meetings</p>	<p>Every other year staff are surveyed to measure comfort & safety levels</p> <p>Dept. of Health keeps track of contacts, referrals, housing</p> <p>Currently not measuring program outcomes</p>

All libraries except the Sacramento Public Library responded that they had multiple outreach programs or that they were expanding their outreach efforts. However, looking at the Sacramento Public Library's webpage, it does show that the library sponsors several community programs.

Other responses worth noting under the program goals and objectives heading include: the San Francisco Public Library, which mentioned it was expanding the workforce rehabilitation program that helps get homeless patrons transitioning back into work, Sacramento and Denver libraries both responded that reduction of behavioral/crisis issues was an important factor in their program objectives, and Kansas City Public Library indicated that they lacked any measurable objectives due to growth and change in the program.

Resource Commitment

All of the libraries had dedicated at least some resources to the homeless outreach efforts. Staff resource input tended to vary from being very high, such as Edmonton Public Library, where *all* staff is expected to participate at some level of outreach and "community" librarians are expected to spend 70% of their time conducting outreach. To the other end of the spectrum, where the Sacramento Public Library contracts out the homeless outreach to an external community partner. In Minneapolis, resources input into the homeless outreach programs and partnerships was higher when grant funding was available and has since declined. Five of the seven libraries maintain a combination of in-house staffing and external partnerships to sustain programs.

As stated earlier, all but two of the libraries (Sacramento & Dallas) had hired trained social workers (MSW) to offer staff training, connect homeless patrons with services, and help coordinate community partnerships. Expanding staff resources often include interns, volunteers, and non-profit partnerships to fill the gaps in funding for additional staff positions. Also of note:

Edmonton, Kansas City, Denver, and San Francisco, all reported that their programs are (or have been) expanding to either more locations or to include more staff/partnerships to support the growth of their outreach programs.

Program Measurement

This section of the survey turned out to be the most varied. Edmonton Public Library had the most robust program for measuring outcomes. Edmonton has taken the initiative and created a template for librarians to create a work plan and show how they intend to achieve their objectives. They also hire interns with some research experience to conduct evaluations and lastly, they have a planning, assessment, and research department that provides support for evaluations. Three of the seven public libraries (Denver, Minneapolis, and San Francisco) measured counts such as number of contacts, services provided, and demographics. These counts were taken by the MSW who likely reported the results to the State's Health Department. Kansas City and Dallas currently don't conduct any measurements except a yearly community survey and Sacramento receives a monthly report from their community partner.

Not surprisingly, when grant money is involved, program measurements increase. Three of the seven (Kansas City, Denver, and Minneapolis) reported outcome measurements to be part of the grant funding requirement. The Kansas City Public Library hired an outside vendor to conduct the evaluation and the grant funder for the Minneapolis Public Library program (Blue Cross/Blue Shield) created a "tool kit" for reporting the program evaluation findings. These were completed by one of the other community partners with input from library staff.

All of the libraries used feedback from staff and patrons as a measurement tool. The frequency of this input varied from bi-weekly staff meetings (Kansas City) to annual staff surveys (Dallas). Customer feedback led to direct changes in reducing barriers to service at the

Minneapolis Public Library where homeless patrons struggled with meeting times and registrations for employment and technology classes. This led the library to change the program structure to a more flexible “drop-in” schedule. In San Francisco, the stimulus for more funding came from the public advocating on behalf of the homeless at meetings hosted by the library commission. Edmonton Public Library hosts community engagement workshops for managers and librarians while also having community librarians’ interview community partners seeking feedback regarding the library’s performance.

Several measurement challenges were reported in the surveys. Minneapolis and Dallas Public Libraries both mentioned the sensitivity of issues facing people experiencing homelessness and patron privacy outweighing the need for outcome measurements. Dallas Public Library found the largest hurdle to overcome were getting long-time staff to listen with fresh ears to their community members—changing programming from what the librarian thought should be offered to focusing on the need of the community. The Edmonton Public Library found challenges when working with community partners as many did not use measurable objectives in their program planning and also trying to get objective feedback from partners as many felt they should not be critical of the library.

Measuring Social Impacts

Libraries, like many other organizations, understand that evaluating program performance is important to ensure that the efforts and resources that are being expended are having the desired effect on the target population or community. However, as the last section pointed out, many libraries do not undertake program evaluations or even track program measures unless specifically requested to do so. This section of the paper will broaden beyond

libraries to look more generally at some good practices and models for program evaluation and measuring social value. It will then return to discuss how the evaluation might be used specifically by libraries to orient and evaluate service to homeless patrons.

Congress enacted the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) in 1993 to hold government funded programs accountable by demonstrating the performance outcomes of programs. (CCF, 2010). However, even before the GPRA Act was passed, the demand to measure “social impacts” or “social value” had been occurring in most sectors in recent times. Financial supporters want to be assured that their money is being directed to the most effective programs, government agencies need to justify spending to the public, and non-profit organizations need to demonstrate that they are appropriating resources effectively and achieving the desired results. Therefore, interest in the social, public, and civic metrics over the past few decades has resulted in hundreds of different methods for calculating social value. The end result is that there is still no single agreed upon definition, let alone measurement, for determining social impact today (Mulgan, 2010). It is therefore not surprising that there is widespread confusion and apprehension as to which methodology to employ.

There are two main reasons why measuring social impacts is important. First, it is imperative to be able to communicate and qualify the benefits of a program to stakeholders in order to ensure the program’s continued funding, demonstrate that the program is achieving the desired benefit, and illustrate the program’s progress. Secondly, iterative evaluation of the program’s development and progress may inform the stakeholders in order to reorganize the strategic outcomes plan and refocus efforts to make the program even more effective (Hebb & Bhatt, 2014).

Limitations Associated with Measuring Social Impacts

It is important to note that the current terminology for discussing social measurements (i.e. social value, social outcomes, social impacts), where “community” or “public” could be substituted in place of “social”, is somewhat ambiguous in the literature. This paper will use the terms “social impacts”, “social outcomes”, and “social value” interchangeably due to the various sources that inform this paper.

Social impact measurements are generally understood to describe those outcomes that are the result of a program’s actions minus what would have happened anyway (deadweight). These measurements are often designated as “soft” outcomes because they are difficult to measure or quantify (i.e. quantifying the benefit of trees in a community). (Eurodiaconia, 2010). The ambiguity of measuring soft outcomes is one reason many public and private organizations are reluctant to use social value measurements to guide decision-making. Another difficulty is that social value assessments often attempt to combine measurements for three very different tasks: accounting to external stakeholders, internal operations management, and social impact evaluation. In the business world, each of these tasks would require a different measurement tool (Muligan, 2010). Lastly, social impact measurement is a relatively new field of measurement (compared with economic theory which has been honed for centuries) and it will likely be some time before a method or methods are generally agreed upon.

Therefore, measuring social impacts can be a complex and often imprecise process. Despite these challenges, the pressure to provide evidence of community benefit using metrics continues to increase. Resistance and apprehension is common among those tasked with performing social impact assessments and often for good reason (Strickhouser and Wright, 2015). Research

conducted by Strickhouser and Wright (*Agency Resistance to Outcomes Measurements*, 2015), found that there are three main barriers to social outcome assessment in agencies:

- **Lack of expertise:** Agencies are often left to figure out how to do evaluations on their own (some funders expect complicated statistical reports) and often lack effective support or clear guidance from funders on the expectations of reporting outcomes. Many agencies also lack the knowledge of what constitutes an effective systematic evaluation.
- **Lack of resources:** Most agencies and organizations lack the resources to produce in-depth outcomes-based reports and are reluctant to take resources away from other services to augment the evaluation budget.
- **Late-stage evaluation:** Many non-profits and agencies are mainly interested in serving people and not necessarily designing an effective evaluation process. Because of this, evaluators are often brought in to the process in the later stages of the program. In order for an evaluation to be successful, it should be implemented from the beginning based on logic models and sound program development design (Strickhouser & Wright, 2015).

Additional difficulties in measuring social value were deliberated by Geoff Mulgan in his paper *Measuring social value* (2010). The United Kingdom's National Health Service (NHS) commissioned a study to determine the best social measurement tool that could be used for decision-making as well as evaluation. The researchers found four "unavoidable complexities that bedevil the measurement of social value":

- **Lack of laws and regularities:** Social science is not physics. People are subject to many social, psychological, and environmental forces and it is difficult to predict what causes will lead to what effects.

- **Disagreement regarding desired outcomes:** In many social action fields (healthcare, schooling, crime prevention, etc.) people do not agree on what the desired outcomes should be. The decision is not just about social value but about social *values*.
- **Social value metrics are unreliable:** Different sectors tend to use different sets of metrics and correlating them is difficult. Other social measurement tools (i.e. cost/benefit analysis, social return on investments, etc.) often use arbitrary costs and paybacks which radically affects the final values.
- **Time value calculations:** Using commercial metrics such as estimating the good an action will bring about years from now with current implementation costs or using commercial “discount rates” that devalue future goods, is not really appropriate for social measurement but often used to make the metrics seem more rigorous (Mulgan 2010).

Lastly, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s 2008 report “*Measuring and/or estimating social value creation*,” examined eight integrated cost approaches to measuring social value creation using two classical methodologies (cost-effectiveness analysis and cost-benefit analysis) and six promising new approaches that had been developed in the previous decade. The study highlighted several key limitations to accurately measuring social value:

- **Inconsistent use of language:** wide spectrum of uses and definitions for the same words and different words being used to describe the same result (i.e. outcome and impact were both used to describe outputs in many studies)
- **Lack of common measures in social sector:** Few common measures used to evaluate social impact either within programs or across programs. Cannot compare results or make arguments because it’s like comparing apples to oranges.

- **Lack of quality data:** Poor quality or lack of data for impacts, outcomes, outputs, and costs arose frequently. The framework is sophisticated but the information going into it is not. Thus, the usefulness of the results are in question.
- **Lack of incentives for transparency:** Bad results tend to get buried and good results are showcased consequently skewing the actual findings.
- **Unintended consequences:** Examples of unintended consequences the study found: cherry-picking programs that address easiest-to-serve populations, quantitative metrics as the sole means of measuring social value (to the exclusion of qualitative metrics), and any measurement is an intervention in and of itself with additional consequences to the results.
- **Inadequate utilization:** Discrepancies were found between theory and practice. Assumption in methodologies are not being tested on an ongoing basis, and therefore, not being used to inform the ongoing practice of using the same methodologies and will have little influence on informing more accurate assumptions.
- **Cost of measurement:** Collecting and analyzing data can be very expensive and the cost is often borne by the grantee (which often have neither the time nor expertise). Additionally, many organizations lack the administrative depth to track social outcome and cost data.

Social Value Assessment Tools and Methodologies for Libraries

The preceding discussion highlights the multitude of complexities and challenges that libraries should recognize regarding social value measurements. The research has shown that the

way to measure social value is variable and depends on a number of individual factors including resources, capacity, activities, and goals. There are also different tools for different purposes whether a library wishes to measure social value quantitatively, qualitatively, or both. The phrase “there is no silver bullet” came up repeatedly throughout the study but so did the implication that thoughtful insight into what is important to the library and its stakeholders, would ultimately lead to the best social assessment tool for the program in question.

With such a wide array of tools and methodologies available, how can the public library know the best approach to use? The answer is simply that the library should measure what best reflects their interests and the interests of their stakeholders within their means and abilities (Hebb & Bhatt, 2014). For this study, two measurement tools were determined to be applicable and of value for determining the social impacts of public libraries partnering with community organizations in an effort to connect those experiencing homelessness with access to information and services: logic models and program evaluations.

LOGIC MODELS

Throughout the study, the most commonly referred to assessment tool for social impact measurement was the logic model. This is likely due to the well-established field of program evaluation of which uses logic models as a tool to “depict the critical elements in a project and identify where the evaluation is important” (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). Additionally, some of the largest non-governmental donors (United Way, Kellogg Foundation) require members to show accountability and have created user guides using logic models as an outcomes measurement tool (Strickhouser and Wright, 2015).

Many organizations use the logic model because it visually depicts the components of a program and provides stakeholders with a roadmap describing the sequence of related events from inputs to impacts. It can also range from being more conceptual (theory of change model) to a very detailed activities-based model (program model). Both types of models use the same logic but differ in their level of detail. The theory of change models displays an idea or program in its simplest form using limited information to test the plausibility of the project or program. (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). An example of a theory of change model for public libraries and homeless outreach programs is shown in Figure 1.

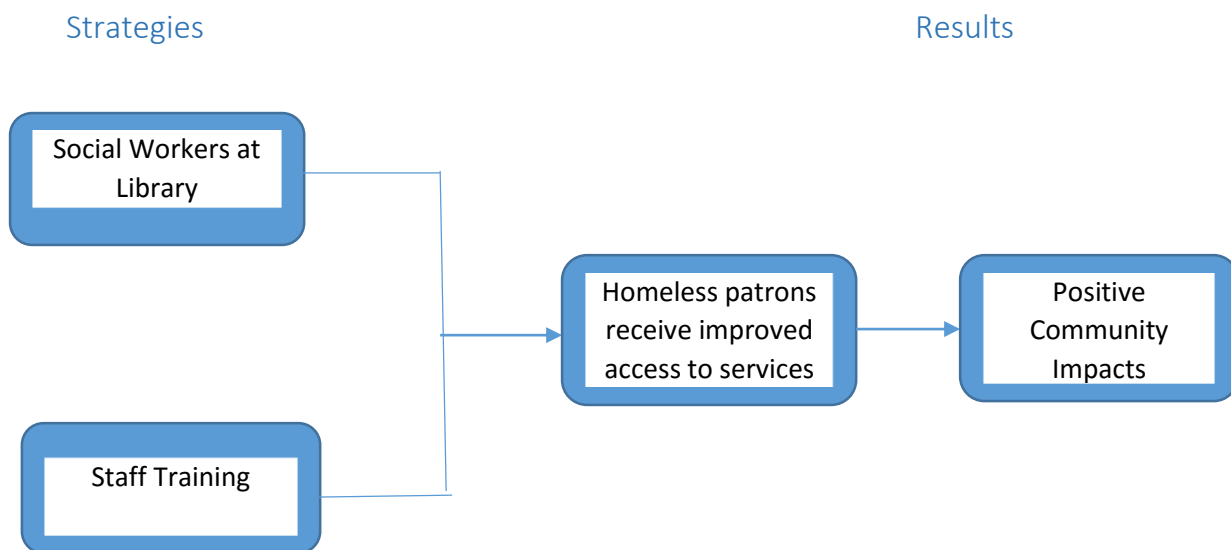


Figure 1. Theory of Change model for public libraries and homeless patron outreach programs (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013)

In contrast to theory of change models, program logic models are operational and depict information that can assist in program design, planning, strategy, development, monitoring, and evaluation. Program logic models also depict the relationship and the sequence of the different elements of the program which may be useful in understanding intended and unintended

consequences (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). An example of a program logic model created by the author for public libraries and a homeless patron outreach program is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Program logic model example for public libraries and homeless patron outreach programs

Project: Minnesota Public Libraries and community partners collaborate to connect library patrons experiencing housing insecurity with the information and services they need while providing an equitable and comfortable library experience for everyone.			
INPUTS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
Investments	Activities	Short/Med-- Term Goals	Long Term Goals
<u>People:</u> Director(s) Librarians/staff Social Workers Community Partners Volunteers <u>Funding:</u> Grants National funds Municipal funds Donations <u>Other:</u> Library Space Time Materials Equipment Technology Programs Services	Social workers at the library Updated information materials for local services Computer/Job training & workshops Shelter book collections Literacy support Remove barriers to library services for homeless patrons Community partnership engagement Staff awareness and training Partnership network creation Upper management “buy-in” Expand services to other branches Manage program effectively	Help connect homeless patrons to the services they need. Seek to understand of the needs of those experiencing housing insecurity and determine the library’s role in providing assistance. Educated and compassionate staff that are comfortable with providing information services to those experiencing homelessness. Promote equitable access by removing barriers homeless patrons may encounter to the use of library materials and services. Work collaboratively with community partners and cultivate trust for continued affiliations. Create internal support network to foster staff and expand programs with regard to community outreach Locus of decision-making	Have a positive impact on the broader community by helping to solve community problems Be a part of the national effort to end homelessness Bridge gap between underserved populations and meaningful educational & career opportunities Ensure equity by providing access to information resources to all people without prejudice Promote civic engagement & community building through community outreach projects Create and sustain strong community networks Institutional commitment & support Foster resilient cities

The program logic model embodies the benefit of systematic planning to achieve the program’s objectives. The development of the logic model itself is important in the process as it involves

stakeholders who not only identify the program’s resources, activities, outputs, outcomes but also the context, underlying assumptions, and program theory. Multiple stakeholder input improves the models by the shared knowledge and experience of participants. (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009).

The process of creating a logic model is iterative and collaborative as well. In a logic model, you are able to adjust certain inputs and actions or even change course as the program process develops. Additionally, the logic model helps create a shared understanding among all stakeholders regarding the focus on program goals, methodologies, and projected outcomes (Kellogg, 2004).

The program logic model can be considered the “backbone” of a program evaluation. It provides the evaluator with important information to plan the evaluation. After the program logic model has been developed, it is then time to determine the evaluation design and the methods that might be used to collect the data. An evaluation plan can be thought of as a “contract” between the evaluator and the library. It serves as a guide that clearly delineates what is being evaluated as well as why, how, and when (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009)

Program Evaluations

The term program “evaluation” means different things to many people and has changed over time. A widely accepted present-day definition of program evaluation comes from Michael Patton (2008): “Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and results of programs to make judgements about the program, improve or further develop program effectiveness, inform decisions about future programming, and/or increase understanding” (Ruft-Eft & Preskill, 2009).

Program evaluations can help libraries make better decisions, improve effectiveness, and use resources efficiently. This type of evaluations can illustrate how a program is operating, show whether it is working as intended, and determine whether it is on track to achieving desired impacts or whether it needs improvement (Martin, 2015). Despite the all positive attributes associated with conducting an evaluation, there are many reasons why organizations do not evaluate programs (CDC, 2007). A compilation of the top ten reasons evaluations are not undertaken is provided by Russ-Eft & Preskill (2009), in Table 3.

Table 3. Top Ten Reasons Evaluation is Neglected (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009)

1. Organization members misunderstand evaluation's purpose and role.
2. Organization members fear the impact of evaluation findings.
3. There is a real or perceived lack of evaluation skills.
4. No one has asked for it.
5. Organization members don't believe the results will be used; data are collected but not analyzed.
6. Organization members view evaluation as time-consuming and laborious.
7. The perceived costs of evaluation outweigh the benefits.
8. Organizational leaders think they already know what does and does not work.
9. Previous experiences with evaluation have been either disastrous or disappointing.
10. Organization members don't value evaluation.

It can be surmised that one or more of the above reasons factor into why libraries are reluctant to conduct program evaluations. The survey responses received in this study showed that, for the most part, program evaluations were not conducted unless there was a compelling reason to do so i.e. grant funding requirements. This is unfortunate because program evaluations help refine data collection and assessment practices so that the information obtained is the most useful to achieving the program goals and advancing the mission. Furthermore, conducting evaluations helps establish a *culture* of evaluating within the institution such that staff are always

thinking about how to make sure the necessary information is being gathered to improve programs (Center for Nonprofit Management, 2016).

It may be a common practice that program evaluations should be completed at the end of a program, however, there are numerous types of evaluations that may be performed at different intervals (but each should be planned for at the inception of a program). Table 4 summarizes the program stage, scope and methods used for the different evaluation types.

- **Formative evaluations:** conducted at the beginning of a new program to determine the program's feasibility, suitability, and depth of support prior to implementation.
- **Process/Implementation evaluations:** determines whether a program's activities have been executed as intended
- **Outcomes/Effectiveness evaluations:** measures if the program is producing the intended outcomes to the target population or if program objectives are being achieved
- **Impact evaluations:** assesses whether program is achieving its stated outcomes (CDC, 2007)

Table 4. Types and Uses of Evaluation (Adapted from CDC, 2007)

EVALUATION TYPES	WHEN TO USE	WHAT IT SHOWS	WHY IT IS USEFUL
Formative Evaluation	During new program development.	Whether the proposed program elements are likely to be needed, understood, and accepted by the population you want to reach.	It allows for modifications to be made to the plan before full implementation begins.
Evaluability Assessment	When an existing program is being modified or is being used in a new setting with a new population.	The extent to which an evaluation is possible, based on the goals and objectives.	Maximizes the likelihood that the program will succeed.
Needs Assessment			
Process Evaluation	As soon as program implementation begins.	How well the program is working. The extent to which the program is being implemented as designed.	Provides an early warning for any problems that may occur.
Program Monitoring	During operation of an existing program.	Whether the program, is accessible and acceptable to its target population.	Allows programs to monitor how well their program plans and activities are working.
Outcome-Evaluation	After the program has made contact with at least one person or group in the target populations.	The degree to which the program is having an effect on the target population’s behaviors.	Tells whether the program is being effective in meeting its objectives.
Objectives-Based Evaluation			
Impact Evaluation	During the operation of an existing program at appropriate intervals. At the end of the program	The degree to which the program meets its ultimate goal.	Provides evidence for use in policy and funding decisions.

The following evaluation framework elements are drawn from Russ-Eft & Preskill (2009):

- **Describing rationale and purpose of the evaluation:** Identifying the purpose and rationale serves as the foundation for the evaluation’s planning, focus, design, and interpretations of results. It also influences the identification of who the stakeholders are, focuses the evaluation questions, and sets the timing of evaluation activities. Stating the purpose of the evaluation helps to clarify expectations and sets limits as to what the evaluation can and cannot produce (CDC, 2011).
- **Developing a logic model for the evaluation:** This topic was discussed in the previous Logic Model section (pp. 28-31)

- **Identify the evaluation stakeholders:** Evaluations are conducted to provide information to several individuals or groups of people. Each of the individuals has a stake in the outcomes of the evaluation to some degree. According to the Center for Disease Control (2007), stakeholders are those who are:
 - Interested in the program and would use the evaluation results. An example of stakeholders for the public library/homeless patron outreach program evaluation might consist of staff/librarians, social workers, community organizations, and city/state agencies e.g. Dept. of Health.
 - Those who are involved in running the program (MN Department of Education, library directors, community organizations).
 - Those who are served by the program (homeless patrons, general public, library staff).

- **Determining the evaluation's key questions:** Key questions focus and guide the entire evaluation process and should be developed thoughtfully and agreed upon by stakeholders (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). Examples of key questions for the public library/homeless patron outreach program might include:
 - How, if at all, does having a program to address homelessness at the library benefit those experiencing homelessness?
 - How, if at all, does having a program to address homelessness benefit the library and the community?
 - How can staff training empower staff to effectively and comfortably provide services to those experiencing homelessness?

- How can libraries partner with community organizations to share limited resources to better help homeless patrons receive the services they need?
 - What data and findings are needed to support decision making?
 - Who will be making the decisions regarding library programs for the homeless?
-
- **Determining the evaluation's underlying assumptions:** Assumptions are formed by beliefs and knowledge. Assumptions become the foundation for the program or social change one is trying to achieve. Acknowledging assumptions from the beginning will clarify and facilitate reaching the intended results (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). An example of underlying assumptions for the public library/homeless patron outreach program evaluation might include:
 - Using library resources to connect homeless patrons with social services will benefit those experiencing homelessness, the library, and the community.
 - Increasing staff awareness and providing training to deescalate crisis situations will empower staff and lead to better customer-staff relationships and safer libraries for everyone.
 - Increasing community outreach with community partners will lead to stronger community ties and more efficient use of resources.

- **Determining the evaluation’s external factors:** The environment in which the program exists includes a variety of external factors that can influence the program’s success. A program does not exist in isolation. These external factors may have a major influence on the achievement of outcomes and they should be acknowledged (University of Wisconsin, 2003). An example of external factors for this project might include:
 - There will always be competition for limited resources.
 - Social, economic, and political factors will influence decision-making
 - Strong leadership commitment is needed to create sustainable partnerships and programs that are effective.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

As can be seen by the previous discussion, creating a logic model and program evaluation does not have to be as menacing as many people perceive it to be. It does require thoughtful consideration about several aspects of the program to help focus and inform the evaluation. However, with a little extra effort prior to the start of a program, the benefits of planning an evaluation can be garnered for the remainder of the program’s existence. If a program is worth implementing, than an evaluation should be considered an investment to ensure the program’s success and as a way to communicate to all the stakeholders how the program will reach its goals. Additionally, a program evaluation does not have to signify either the continuance or the end of a program, but rather can be a process for improvement and learning what works and what doesn’t.

This study intended to examine the ways in which public libraries are moving “beyond books” by expanding their community outreach efforts to aid special populations such as those

experiencing homelessness. The literature review and the study confirm that effective partnerships can be formed between the libraries and state agencies, community organizations, and other institutions to embolden individuals and enhance communities. Libraries are recognized as trusted, important institutions that are a vital part of their communities. The expansion of services to those patrons that require additional support demonstrate the library's commitment to the community and strengthen relationships among residents and community groups. It is hoped that these relationships will cultivate communications and trust to sustain innovative partnerships in an effort to find solutions the larger problems that challenge many communities.

The survey sample responses highlighted a few points that are likely representative among a larger range of public libraries across the country:

- There are many ways libraries can engage the community through outreach.
- Engaging community partners is key in sharing resources and knowledge
- Measuring program outcomes is not a priority for many public libraries

It is the last point that was the most illuminating for this study. While this paper discussed the difficulties in measuring social value or community impacts, it has also shown that a thoughtful program evaluation can be a valuable tool and a benefit to all stakeholders. Many library staff, community organizations, and other partnerships put in countless hours into programming and projects designed to have a desired outcome. It is to the benefit of all involved that libraries begin to think about developing a culture of evaluating programs to ensure that they are maximizing their resources and achieving desired outcomes.

The United Way of America (UWA) and their partners (approx.19,000) use program outcome measurements because of the important benefits it provides the UWA and their agencies such as:

- Focus on shared goals (88%)
- Communicate results to stakeholders (88%)
- Clarify program purpose (86%)
- Identify effective practices (84%)
- Compete for resources (83%)
- Enhance record keeping (80%)
- Improve service delivery (76%) (UAW, 2005).

Furthermore, according to UWA “agency learning that comes from identifying and measuring outcomes offers a rich input into the identification of community-level issues and the development of community change strategies” (UAW, 2005).

There can be no argument that measuring outcomes is beneficial in understanding how a program is working, where it needs improvement, and communicating those findings. So how can the libraries improve their program evaluation frequency? The National Institute of Justice provides some insight into this matter: **“The key to developing a program that can be evaluated is to have the goal of future evaluation in mind when designing the program’s documentation, goals, and implementation. Stakeholders also must continually monitor the programs progress and verify that relevant data are being captured, particularly if the goal is to conduct an outcome evaluation”** (Martin, 2015).

Lastly, a few recommendations from the study are provided for facilitating program evaluations:

- [Agree on consistent measurement terms and scales among partners](#): There is a substantive need to create a shared understanding of what is being measured and valued. Different partners, funders, governments, etc. will have a different understanding of what is important to measure. Often in program evaluation, several different scales and measures are being used across organizations. When comparing measures internally, it usually isn't an issue but if you need to try to compare data across sectors using inconsistent measures (apples to oranges) it becomes very challenging to correlate the data and make sense of it, let alone measure impact (Kirkland, 2012).
- [Only collect data you will use](#): While large data sets may be useful in measuring circulation or usage, smaller data collections may be more appropriate for measuring social impacts. There is a need for better clarity and proper data collection in that the focus should be on collecting only that data that will be useful for decision-making and reporting of impacts (Kanani, 2014). Focusing data collection can reduce staff resistance to program measurement participation.
- [Seek an experienced evaluator](#): Libraries should hire a professional evaluator or train a few staff in evaluation methods to work with individual programs and oversee the evaluations. If possible, libraries may also partner with a university, an experienced researcher, or another agency to help construct an evaluation plan to ensure the program is feasible, financially viable, and that the results will be useful to the library and other stakeholders (Martin, 2015).

- **Involve stakeholders and evaluators early in the process:** Writing an evaluation plan will not guarantee that the program will be implemented on time, within budget constraints, or even progress as intended. As such, it is imperative that the roles and responsibilities of all those involved (stakeholders, program staff, evaluators, etc.) are identified and agreed upon at the beginning of the planning process. This is even more important when multiple agencies or organizations are involved (CDC, 2011).
- **Institutional commitment is key:** Program success is tied to the commitment of individuals to see the program through. However, institutional commitment is seen as an integral part of the libraries mission, which means “the work of multiple departments and program areas foster engagement, supported at the senior executive level and board” (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2015).

REFERENCES

Blank, B.T. (2016) Public libraries add social workers and social programs. *The New Social Worker*. <http://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/practice/public-libraries-add-social-workers-and-social-programs/>

Bryne, K. (2005). *Community Impact Mapping*. Development Trusts Association.
<http://portals.wi.wur.nl/files/docs/ppme/impactmapping.pdf>

Center for Disease Control. (2007, January) *Types of Evaluation*. Practical Use of Program Evaluation among Sexually Transmitted Disease
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/Program/pupestd/Types%20of%20Evaluation.pdf>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011). *Developing an effective evaluation plan*. Atlanta, Georgia: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/cdc-evaluation-workbook-508.pdf>

Center for Nonprofit Management. (2016). *What is an evaluation plan? Why should I create one?* <http://nonprofitanswerguide.org/faq/evaluation/what-is-an-evaluation-plan-and-why-create-one/>

Compassionate Capital Fund Natural Resource Center. (2010). *Strengthening non-profits: a capacity builder's resource library*.
<http://strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/guidebooks/MeasuringOutcomes.pdf>

Curley, A. (1974). Social responsibility and libraries. *Advances in librarianship*, 4, 77-90.

Esquerra, L. Telephone interview by the author. March 28, 2016.

Eurodiaconia. (n.d.) Briefing for members: Measuring social value. Retrieved March 11, 2016, from http://www.eurodiaconia.org/files/Eurodiaconia_policy_papers_and_briefings/Briefing_-_Measuring_Social_Value.pdf

Federal Communications Commission. (2015). Dial 211 for essential community services. Updated (2015, November 3). <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/dial-211-essential-community-services>

Furst, R. (2013, February 5). Security getting tougher at downtown Minneapolis library. *StarTribune*. <http://www.startribune.com/security-getting-tougher-at-downtown-minneapolis-library/189750091/>

Hendricks, M., Plantz, M. C., & Pritchard, K. J. (2008). Measuring outcomes of United Way–funded programs: Expectations and reality. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2008(119), 13-35.

Holt, L. E. & Holt, G.E. (2010). *Public library services for the poor: Doing all we can*. American Library Association: Chicago.

Institute of Museum and Library Services. (2015). *Museums, Libraries and Comprehensive Initiatives: A First Look at Emerging Experience*. <https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/museumslibrariesandcomprehensiveinitiatives.pdf>

Kanani, R. (2014, March 15). How to measure social impact: New research and insights. *Forbes*.
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/rahimkanani/2014/03/15/how-to-measure-social-impact-new-research-and-insights/#20994b574be6>

Kelleher, A. (2013). Not just a place to sleep: homeless perspectives on libraries in central Michigan. *Library Review*, 62(1/2), 19-33.

Kellogg, W. K. (2004). Logic model development guide. *Michigan: WK Kellogg Foundation*.

Kirkland, K. (2012, September 17). What's the best way to measure social value so that it's relevant to everyone? *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2012/sep/17/best-measure-social-value>

Knowlton L.W. & Phillips, C.C. (2013). The logic model guidebook: Better strategies for great results. *Sage Publishing, Inc.* http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/23937_Chapter_1_Introducing_Logic_Models.pdf

Martin, A.B. Plan for program evaluation from the start. *NIJ Journal* 275 (2015): 24-28.
<http://www.nij.gov/journals/275/pages/plan-for-program-evaluation.aspx>

Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA). *Metropolitan public libraries*.
<http://www.melsa.org/melsa/index.cfm/about/library-list-pdf/> Updated February 16, 2016.

Minnesota Department of Education. (2014). *Minnesota public library statistics (slides)*.
<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/Lib/StateLibServ/LibStat/>

Mulgan, G. (2010). Measuring social value. *Stanford Soc Innov Rev*, 8(3), 38-43.

National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2015). *Out of reach. Low wages and high rents lock renters out*.

file:///C:/Users/Pamela/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/RX0PJNBZ/OOR_2015_FULL.pdf

Nemec-Loise, J. (2014, September 23). A little extra help—why public libraries need social workers. *Public Libraries Online*. <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2014/09/a-little-extra-help-why-public-libraries-need-social-workers/>

Pamias, Alexandra. (2015, November 8). Libraries fill the gap for district day programs. *StreetSense*. <http://streetsense.org/article/libraries-fill-the-gap-for-district-day-programs/#.VwBfo2b2aUk>

Patton, M. (2008). *Utilization-focused evaluation*. 4th Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 2008.

Peet, L. (2014, December 4). Edmonton public library adds homeless outreach to five new branches. *Library Journal*. <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2014/12/public-services/edmonton-public-library-adds-homeless-outreach-to-five-new-branches/>

Ruhlmann, Ellyn. (2014, November 24). A Home to the homeless. *American Libraries Magazine*. <http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2014/11/24/a-home-to-the-homeless/>

Russ-Eft, D., & Preskill, H. (2009). *Evaluation in organizations a systematic approach: a systematic approach to enhancing learning, performance, and change*. Basic Books.

Simpson, I. (2014, July 17). U.S. libraries become front line in fight against homelessness. *Reuters*. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-homelessness-libraries-idUSKBN0FM16V20140717>

Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality. (2015). State of the states: poverty and inequality report 2015. *Pathways*. Special Issue 2015.

http://inequality.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/SOTU_2015.pdf

Strickhouser, S. M & Wright, J. D. (2015). Agency Resistance to Outcome Measurement. *Journal of Applied Science*. 9(2), pp.115-124

Troll, D. A. (2002). How and why libraries are changing: what we know and what we need to know. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 2(1), 99-123.

Westbrook, L. (2015). "I'm Not a Social Worker": An Information Service Model for Working with Patrons in Crisis. *The Library*, 85(1).

Wilder Research. (2013). *Homelessness in Minnesota. Findings from the 2012 statewide homeless study*.

[file:///C:/Users/Pamela/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/Q2E9F26D/Homeless-](file:///C:/Users/Pamela/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/Q2E9F26D/Homelessness%20in%20Minnesota%20-)

[ness%20in%20Minnesota%20-%20Findings%20from%20the%202012%20Statewide%20Homeless%20Study.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Pamela/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/Q2E9F26D/Homelessness%20in%20Minnesota%20-%20Findings%20from%20the%202012%20Statewide%20Homeless%20Study.pdf)

Wilder Research. (2012). *Single night count of people experiencing homelessness fact sheet*.

[http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Publications/Studies/Homelessness in Minnesota 2012 Study/Single Night Count of People Experiencing Homelessness, Fact Sheet.pdf](http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Publications/Studies/Homelessness%20in%20Minnesota%202012%20Study/Single%20Night%20Count%20of%20People%20Experiencing%20Homelessness,%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf)

United Way of America. (2005). *Connecting program outcome measurement to community impact*.

<http://studio.unitedway.org/CILresources08/files/agency%20relations/connectingPOM%20to%20OCI.pdf>

University of Wisconsin Extension. (2003). *Enhancing Program Performance with Logic Models*. <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/pdf/lmcourseall.pdf>

Urban Library Council. (2016). *Leadership brief: Building connected communities*. http://www.urbanlibraries.org/filebin/pdfs/ULC_Leadership_Brief_Building_Connected_Communities.pdf

Wise, C. (2015, January 28). *Libraries social worker helps homeless seeking quiet refuge*. San Francisco, CA. PBS Newshour. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/library-social-worker-helps-homeless-seeking-quiet-refuge/>

Yi Ling Wong. (2009). Homelessness in public libraries. *Journal of Access Services*. 6:3, 396-410, DOI: 10.1080/15367960902908599