

# Celebrating Libraries in Alabama



## Celebrating Alabama's Progress

Certified Public Manager® Program

CPM Solutions Alabama 2022



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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Introduction**

*“Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities.” R. David Lankes*

How do libraries impact their communities? Some people may think of their library only providing books. However, they also serve as the community hub for after-school programs, summer reading programs, internet and computer access, volunteer events, and so much more. Libraries continue to remain relevant in our communities, but they face several challenges exacerbated by rapid increases in technological change. Overcoming these challenges are crucial for libraries to remain relevant.

Alabama Public Library Service (APLS) is a state agency that serves Alabama public libraries by providing leadership, resources, and expertise. The *Celebrating Libraries in Alabama CPM Solutions Alabama Team* will identify and examine services offered by APLS and offer recommendations for Alabama libraries to thrive as learning centers for the future. The research project team focused on the following:

- Identified top challenges facing Alabama public libraries.
- Examined services provided by APLS that allow Alabama public libraries to overcome challenges and thrive as community learning centers.
- Identified effective strategies utilized by Alabama public libraries and/or libraries outside the state that meet community needs.
- Compiled recommendations for customer focused strategies and offerings that will enable Alabama public libraries to thrive in supporting and building communities.

## **What is the Alabama Public Library Service?**

With origins being traced back to 1901, APLS was created in 1939. Their mission “*is to provide services and leadership necessary to meet the educational, informational, cultural, and economic needs of Alabama’s citizens of all ages by providing leadership, guidance, and support for the development of local public libraries; and through service as an information resource center for state government and state employees*” (2021 Annual Report). APLS serves more than 220 Alabama public libraries in all 67 counties by offering innovative learning services for all people. APLS uses state funds provided by the State Legislature and federal funds provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to help better serve these libraries. APLS

services include Information Technology (IT), library development, reference services, the Regional Library for the Blind, and free library services to state employees. Some recent APLS initiatives include providing new computers for public libraries, purchasing wireless hotspots for use by patrons without reliable internet service, participating in the “Reimagining School Readiness” program for children who do not attend preschool, participating in a braille eReader program, and launching the new APLS website (2021 Annual Report).



## **Challenges**

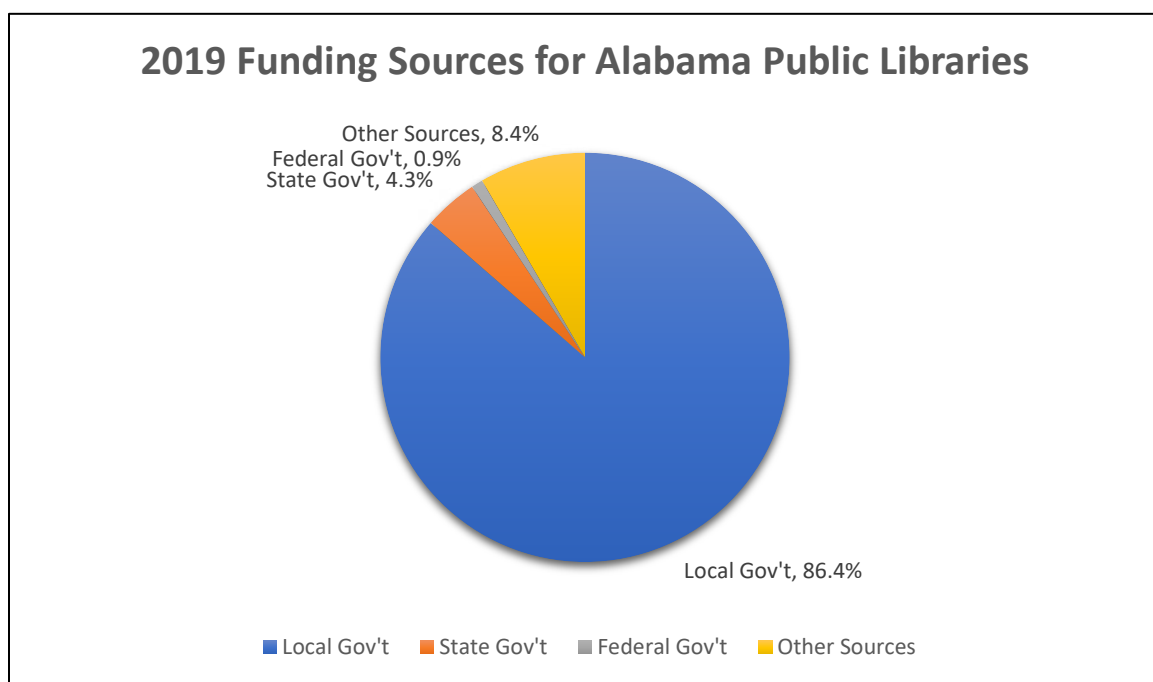
Given the role public libraries play in communities, it is important to identify and understand the challenges Alabama public libraries face. Several challenges have been identified, and this project will focus on the following: funding, staffing/professional development, and marketing. In researching these challenges, the team found that some rural public libraries do not thrive in the same ways as public libraries in urban areas. In addition, there is some overlap between the challenges, in which funding is often the common factor that contributes to other challenges.

## **Funding**

Funding is an issue that all libraries face. APLS receives funding from both state and federal sources. APLS provides funding to local libraries from the federal and state sources. Funding from the state is distributed quarterly to public libraries based on a per capita formula. The total state aid received by Alabama public libraries in 2021 was \$5,527,255.00. Jefferson

County (an urban area) received the highest amount of state aid, \$742,395.18, while Greene County (a rural area) received the lowest amount, \$9,143.36. Federal funds are authorized by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and are distributed by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). APLS may use these funds to provide funding and support for public libraries to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement (2021 Annual Report). In 2022, Alabama received an allotment of \$2,715,590.00 (The Grants to States Program, n.d.). Given Alabama's population of approximately 5,024,279, Alabama's allotment equates to approximately \$0.54 per person (Alabama: 2020 Census, n.d.). This amount puts the funding challenge for Alabama public libraries in perspective.

Due to the per capita formula for funding, rural public libraries in Alabama that serve lower populations are not provided as much funding as libraries in urban areas. Most funding for public libraries come from the local or city government, which can result in smaller operational budgets for rural libraries. According to 2019 fiscal data for Alabama public libraries provided by APLS, on average, the local government provided 86.4% of the funding; the state, 4.3%; the federal government, 0.9%; and other sources, 8.4%.



*Data provided by APLS*

However, libraries that serve urban areas also have funding challenges. For example, the Hoover Public Library is a large library that sits in the suburban city of Hoover, which is located less than 10 miles south of Birmingham in Jefferson County. Hoover Public Library Director,

Amanda Borden, indicated that even with a budget of approximately \$7 million, marketing and the rising need of expensive eBooks create challenges for their library (Borden).

Libraries often seek additional assistance with funding as a way of becoming more creative with the resources and services that they can provide. Lack of funding means that valued programs and offerings may have to be cut and publicly requested programs and service may have to go undeveloped. Although there are grants available for which the libraries may seek additional funding, staffing shortages can result in not enough time to apply for these grants. Staffing challenges are elaborated on further in the next section.

### **Staffing/Professional Development**

As indicated above, personnel expenses are a large challenge for public libraries, and this often results in many public libraries being understaffed. In rural libraries, staff members take on the roles of multiple individuals to ensure that all the necessary work is accomplished. Many rural libraries are understaffed, so one person may be tasked with running the entire library. This issue can be summarized with the following quote: “One thing to remember is that while libraries in general often seek to be everything to everyone, we cannot.” (Freeman, 2016) In these cases, adequate training and professional development is delayed or simply cannot be done. Librarians can miss out on professional development training and other programs due to insufficient time to attend conferences. These professional development opportunities are typically specifically designed to give librarians the opportunity to learn from other librarians and possibly collaborate for the betterment of the library community.

With limited staffing, rural libraries do not have the means to be everything to those they serve and oftentimes must come up with creative ways to provide the best services they can to those they serve. To compensate for a lack of staffing, rural libraries often depend on volunteers and part time staff members to continue serving the needs of the community (Freeman, 2016).

### **Marketing**

Even with the many services libraries provide for their communities, marketing and public awareness of these services is a major challenge. The APLS LSTA Five Year Plan highlights this issue as a goal for improvement and proposes increased public awareness and use of libraries for information access, knowledge, ideas and cultural heritage (Alabama LSTA 2018-2022 Plan, 2017). The implementation evaluation report of this plan included a survey of the progress of this



goal. One respondent in the evaluation stated: “We talk to people all the time who were not aware of the many services available (for FREE) in their community.” Another respondent in the evaluation suggested the better use of Facebook and online tools (Kyrillidou & Wilson, 2022). Hoover Public Library Director, Amanda Borden, also emphasized the marketing challenge by stating: “What we struggle with is getting to the people who don't know about us.” She indicated that people ages 20 to 40 without children is the demographic to least likely utilize the library (Borden).

Libraries often use word of mouth within the community to market their services. Another tool is the use of websites and social media. However, after reviewing the library listing on the APLS website, approximately 20 Alabama public libraries do not have a functioning website (Find My Library, n.d.). After conducting a social media search of the Alabama public libraries, 13 libraries were without a social media page, and an additional 25 libraries do not regularly post on their social media page. This highlights an area of need for website development and social media use to help better market Alabama public libraries. The funding and staffing challenges also contribute to the marketing challenge, as understaffed libraries often do not have the time to market their services.

Another contributing factor to the marketing challenge is the lack of internet services in rural communities. According to the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), 18.8% of Alabama addresses do not have access to 100 Mbps download and 25 Mbps upload broadband, which is the threshold recommended as the State’s five-year target. Also, 12.7% of Alabama addresses are unserved by broadband of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload (The Alabama Connectivity Plan, 2021). As indicated in the graph below, Alabama’s more rural counties have the lowest rate of access to high-speed broadband. This impacts the ability of rural libraries to successfully use websites and social media to market their services.

**Table 1: Current status of broadband coverage in Alabama**

	25/3	100/20	100/100	1000/1000
Number of unserved addresses (out of total of 1,649,535)	210,302	310,874	1,237,122	1,262,945
Percentage of total addresses that are unserved	12.7%	18.8%	74.99%	75.56%

Analysis of current Alabama Broadband Map data finds that census blocks across the State range from completely served to completely unserved at broadband speeds of 25/3 up to symmetrical gigabit. The maps below illustrate 25/3 and 100/20 service levels.

- Census Block is completely served
- 1% - 50% Unserved
- 50% - 80% Unserved
- 80% - 100% Unserved
- 100% Unserved

**Figure 1: Unserved by 25/3**



**Figure 2: Unserved by 100/20**



*This information was provided in the ADECA Alabama Connectivity Plan, dated December 2021*

## **Overcoming Challenges (APLS, Alabama Libraries, and Other States)**

This section will examine and identify services and strategies used by APLS, Alabama libraries, and other states to overcome the challenges and thrive as community learning centers.

### **Funding**

As indicated in the funding challenges section, APLS is limited to the per capita formulas for providing federal and state aid. The goals and objectives for the federal (IMLS) funds are highlighted in the states five-year plan. In 2022, Alabama received an allotment of \$2,715,590.00 (The Grants to States Program, n.d.). The total state aid received in 2021 was \$5,527,255.00 (2021 Annual Report). Beginning late 2022, rural libraries can complete an application for grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000 over the course of three years. *Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities* is an initiative of the American Library Association (ALA) that will offer more than \$7 million in grants to small and rural libraries to increase accessibility of facilities, services, and programs geared toward serving individuals with disabilities (Libraries Transforming Communities: Facilitation Skills for Small and Rural Libraries, 2017).

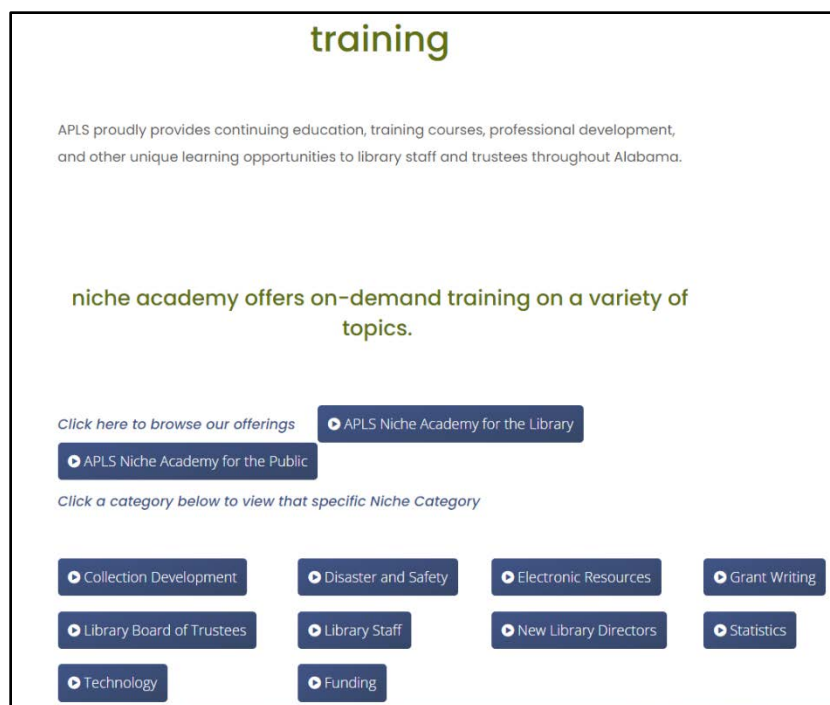
Libraries can seek out other funding sources such as Friends of the Library. Friends of the Library is an organization created to assist libraries with extra funding. Alabama has several chapters of the Friends of the Library. For example, the Friends of the Autauga-Prattville Public Library is an association of people who realize the vital need for community library services, programs, and materials and is dedicated to supporting and enhancing the Autauga-Prattville libraries through fundraising and advocacy efforts (Friends of the Autauga-Prattville Public Library, n.d.). The Friends of the Montgomery City-County Public Library's main purposes are (1) to help raise funds for the enhancement of public library services, (2) to help raise funds for special programs, (3) to encourage gifts, memorials, and endowments for the benefit of library services, and (4) to assist the library in its public information effort (Friends of the Library, n.d.). The Anniston-Calhoun County, Alabama chapter focuses on providing additional services, equipment, books, and materials that are out of the scope of the library's general budget. The chapter also seeks to gain the public's attention on library services by advocating for support through donations, cultural activities, and community involvement (Friends of the Library, n.d.).

In Mississippi, The Friends of Mississippi Libraries, Inc. are found in many Mississippi communities. The group members join to support, improve, and promote the local library by raising funds for special library services and programs, advocating for library services, volunteering with children's summer reading programs, sponsoring National Library week events and other activities (Directors' Resource Guide, n.d.). In Harrison County, Mississippi, the Friends of the Library stands to do for the library what individuals do for one another: they come forth with ideas, time, advice, encouragement, and financial support. The organization helps to raise funds, promote services, serve in a PR capacity, and act as an organized support group (Friends of the Library, n.d.). The Friends of Tennessee Libraries is a network of volunteers that focus on promoting and supporting libraries and their friends while advocating funding for libraries on a local, state, and national basis (Friends of Tennessee Libraries).

### **Staffing/Professional Development**

APLS provides consulting services for Alabama public libraries through advisement, library assessments, and professional knowledge. The consulting staff has expertise in library operations, statistics, disaster planning, grant writing, advocacy, collection development, and state programming for all age levels. APLS received a grant to participate in the "Reimagining School Readiness" (RSR) training with the Bay Area Discovery Museum. RSR supports early learning in public libraries for children from birth to age eight and their families. The training of librarians on this initiative began in January 2022. Other recent consulting services included on-site and virtual site visits, development of a new Emergency Reporting Message Board for disaster-related closures, transition to an electronic state aid paperwork system, library trustee training, and new director's training (2021 Annual Report). The APLS website is another good resource for professional development. There are training manuals, PowerPoints, webinars and a list of live training opportunities for libraries to utilize. The website also recently added the APLS Niche Academy, which offers on-demand training on a variety of topics for librarians and the public.

APLS also offers scholarship grants to graduate students attending University of Alabama, School of Library Information Studies.



*Training page on the APLS website*

Some Alabama public libraries are also members of regional library systems that help provide support to their branches. The regional library usually serves as the go-to for resources and development. The Georgia Public Library Service is experiencing many long-serving library leaders reaching retirement age. To combat this, they are seeking a new generation of well-trained, savvy, and politically skilled leaders for their public libraries. They have a PINNACLE leadership program that helps provide the training needed, beyond library school, for emerging leaders in the profession (Hakes). The Florida Division of Library and Information Services emphasized having up-to-date and clear policies and procedures and the help of social workers in libraries to assist their staffs (Holland). The State Library of North Carolina is offering scholarship opportunities to library staff to attend conferences related to professional development and continuing education. An example is a scholarship to attend The Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) Conference. The 2022 conference will discuss topics related to making changes that are "real, sustainable, and equitable" for rural and small libraries (2022 Conference, n.d.).

## Marketing

APLS has provided various services to help increase public awareness and market Alabama libraries. They have provided libraries with technology upgrades and IT support services to help provide information access to communities. The technology upgrades include the development of a new APLS agency website, purchasing of new computers for public libraries, supporting the purchase of broadband services for public libraries, and purchasing wireless hotspots for use by patrons without reliable internet service. APLS assisted 105 Alabama public libraries purchase 1,001 public computers, and 180 public libraries and branches were provided broadband service through the Alabama Supercomputer Authority. As part of the Wi-Fi Hotspot project that began in August 2021, 196 hotspots have been circulated at 28 public libraries with future plans to acquire an additional 112 hotspots for 31 rural public libraries (2021 Annual Report). The needs for technology in the rural areas is captured with this testimonial: *"[Name of Library] is located in rural northwest AL. High speed internet is not available to most of our patrons and if it were, some would not be able to pay for it. Thanks to an LSTA grant we were able to purchase computers for the community to use."* (Kyrillidou & Wilson, 2022). APLS also provides free website development services for public libraries with limited internet access. In addition, APLS served more than 8,400 patrons and participated in 38 outreach events through the Alabama Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled in Fiscal Year 2021 (2021 Annual Report). These services highlight the success of APLS to support public libraries and their communities and increases the public awareness of library services.



*The Montgomery City-County Public Library markets their technology lending program.*

Some ways Alabama public libraries are better marketing their libraries include the use of multiple social media platforms. After review of various social media platforms, Alabama public libraries use Facebook most commonly, but other social media platforms that are currently being used include Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok, Tumbler, Twitter, and YouTube. These platforms help cater to the younger generations in addition to using the more traditional word-of-mouth, printed calendars, and newspaper methods. The Hoover Public Library goes beyond its four walls to serve its community through outreach programs such as story time at day cares, senior centers, and parks, 15 Little Free Libraries at apartment communities, and remote lockers at East 59 Café. Amanda Borden believes in, as she said, "meeting the people where they are." She also indicated her staff is working to add even more reasons for people to come to the library such as having "a library of things", which enables individuals to check out odd items such as a go-pro camera, gardening equipment, and baking equipment (Borden). Georgia Public Library Service runs ad campaigns on public radio and iHeartRadio throughout the state, sends email marketing messaging, newsletters and offers marketing grants to their libraries so they can learn more about marketing and raise more awareness in their communities (Hakes). Florida uses handouts such as brochures, bookmarks, flyers (Holland), and Tennessee uses local TV channels to market special events like teen or zoo events (Davis).

## **Recommendations for Customer Focused Strategies**

Based on the identification of the top challenges facing Alabama public libraries and the examination of services and strategies utilized by APLS, Alabama public libraries, and outside state libraries, our team has compiled the following recommendations for customer focused strategies and offerings that will enable Alabama public libraries to thrive in supporting and building communities.

### **Foster Relationships - Library Advocacy**

Every member of the public library ecosystem is an advocate who contributes to how decision makers at all levels of government perceive their libraries, even when they are not actively participating in legislative advocacy. For this reason, coordinated, year-round advocacy is an organization's best foundation for successful legislative advocacy. Preparation is essential.

The decisions made by elected and appointed officials have a profound and long-lasting impact on the future of public libraries, the profession, and the communities they serve. Therefore,



public library workers and supporters should engage with elected officials at every level; local, state and federal. The post-pandemic era has resulted in an evolved role of public libraries. The role has evolved from just being a place to come for books to a place you come for computer access, Wi Fi, take-home hotspots, and to get smarter about how to use the internet.

Public libraries are particularly well used by groups that lack access to new technologies at home and at work. These access points and training programs are essential. People who use libraries and other access points are also proportionately more likely than other groups to use the Internet to take courses and find jobs, and they need training to learn how to use these technologies.

Even amidst political turmoil and anxiety and threats to core library values, we have learned that library communities can be reluctant to engage with elected officials as they feel they don't know how to start the conversation. We feel it is important to develop these skills as political advocacy no longer exists behind closed doors. It is online and instantaneous. So how do you get the messaging out there? The first need is to be active on social media. There are multiple social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn, and they reach different audiences.

Facebook Town Hall can be used to find the legislators and follow the communication with their constituents. LinkedIn can be used for following the general policy discussion and others in the library community.

Public librarians, staff, and supporters should foster individual relationships with legislators. They should not be afraid to be initiators and get out there and get the dialogue going. As constituents, they can provide the data, stories, and rationale for voting for or sponsoring any of the things that are needed from the legislature.

The benefits of networking with a member of Congress and explaining the importance of Alabama public libraries and their impact within a community cannot be overstated. Alabama Congress members may not be aware of how or why senior citizens, economically disadvantaged citizens, or families are utilizing libraries. There is great value in networking with a member of Congress or Congressional staffer as having a face and a name to associate with library issues may open new avenues of advocacy. It is one thing to look at libraries theoretically; it is another thing to have an appropriate representative from the Alabama library community meet with and explain





what the APLS is doing, who it is doing it for, why it matters, and to stress the importance and value legislative advocacy for assistance to meet the stated goals of the APLS.

To increase the effectiveness of advocacy, individuals in the community can tell some stories and make it local. It's the storytelling. It's making it personal and helping them relate to their own situation and the situation with their constituents. Alabama public libraries should encourage citizens to attend meetings and share their story about how the library has impacted their life and why they know the needs of Alabama public libraries are critical.

Alabama public libraries are vital to the people they serve and the community at large. The library is an indispensable resource that transforms the lives people and the community itself. APLS and its many dedicated staff members are continually transforming to keep up with and ahead of the evolving needs.

### **Public Partnerships with State Agencies – Reimagining School Readiness**

Alabama policy makers are exploring ways to address underperforming schools. More specifically, elementary school performance is being analyzed to determine ways to buttress proficiency and preparation for high school and the workforce. Several agencies are collaborating to provide a layered approach to improving performance. Through the Alabama Certified Public Management program, the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR), Alabama Public Library Service (APLS), and Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE) agencies are exploring a collaboration that would make use of the Reimagining School Readiness (RSR) program to address underperforming schools from the early care and education discipline. This would be the first collaboration between the agencies. The early care and education agencies see a great opportunity to assist APLS with funding to support training and materials that can be used on site and by parents with their children in their own homes.

The RSR model is based upon research and evidence. In 2016, The Center for Childhood Creativity shared that the “haphazard transition to kindergarten is one of the nation’s most challenging and critical issues”. The data illustrates the enormous disparity between children coming from low-income households and communities compared to those from more affluent areas. Such students often enter school behind not only academically, but also socially. Numerous published reports and case studies indicate that once a child enters school behind their expected proficiency level, they tend to not only remain behind, but often the gap between their current

proficiency level and the expected proficiency level grows larger over time. “School readiness” is currently recognized as a broad term that encompasses many concepts including math skills, reading skills, curiosity, executive functioning, language skills, fine and gross motor skills, social-emotional skills, health, and more.

According to Lewit & Baker (1995), many past interpretations of the term “school readiness” has primarily revolved around the readiness of a child in a school setting. As time has passed, longitudinal research and studies have been conducted that have provided additional, more-detailed information related to the skills and access to programs needed to be considered ready for school. The Center for Childhood Creativity reported in 2016, based upon their extensive review of available literature, completed research, and more, that the following domains and factors are consistently shown to provide the largest impact on school readiness: (1) cognition: scientific reasoning and math knowledge/skills, (2) language and literacy: language development and literacy, (3) approaches to learning: curiosity/interest/motivation and executive function, motor development, (4) health: sleep/nutrition/toxic stress and gross and fine motor development, and (5) social and emotional development: self-regulation and prosocial behaviors.



*RSR kit provided by APLS*

Subsequently, these domains and pre-requisite skills are parallel to those used in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework compiled by the U.S. Department of Health and Human services, Administration for Children and Families in 2015. Although the Center for Childhood Creativity summarized many items that contribute to overall school readiness, in their review of Duncan’s 2007 seminal study for identifying school readiness, they mention that, of the contributing factors examined, the most apparently critical for school readiness were early reading and math skills, specifically including ordinality, as well as a working knowledge of numbers. Interestingly, findings illustrate that while early reading skills were only predictive measures for later reading achievement, early math skills were not only a predictive measure for later math and reading achievement, but they also proved to be a more consistent predictive indicator on later reading achievement than early reading skills.

While the benefits of the RSR model are value added as an independent program, the goal of the proposed collaboration is to provide the RSR model through an after-school program. The increasing demands of the workforce combined with the increased numbers of working parents create a continued need for traditional childcare and access to after-hours care as well. Although there has been some increased availability of after school programs, information shared from the Afterschool Alliance in 2020 illustrates that for each student enrolled in an afterschool program there are three more students who are waiting for an opening. That figure from the same source has grown to one-in-four in 2022. This source further demonstrates that this imbalance in supply and demand equates to approximately 25 million students who do not have access to afterschool programming.

Data provided by the Afterschool Alliance specifically pertaining to the state of Alabama indicate that 18,643 children in the state participate in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Afterschool and summer program. Although this funding is very helpful, it is insufficient to accommodate the needs and interests expressed throughout the state. Recent information shows that currently, three out of every ten 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center applications were unable to be funded during the most recent competitive cycle. Not only have 87% of Alabama parents expressed they are in favor of publicly funded afterschool programs and 88% have expressed favor for publicly funded summer learning opportunities, but it has also been established that investing funds in afterschool programs creates savings. The Alabama Alliance notably calls afterschool and summer programming a “smart investment”. This statement is supported by

research conducted in several states, and for every \$1 million invested, \$3 million or more is saved in the following areas: improved student performance at school, increased future earning potential when students become adults, and by the reduction of crime and juvenile delinquency.

Implementation of a program such as the RSR model through the libraries and branches of the facilities served by APLS may be a successful approach to increasing school readiness in the student population of the children of Alabama. A second goal is to use the afterschool program to assist with expanding the patronage of the citizens in the communities that are served by the participating libraries. Coincidentally, these combined efforts could also result in the rejuvenation of libraries in the brick-and-mortar format as a continued and important community institution.

### **Community Support of Staffing to Increase Professional Development**

Based on the current strategies being implemented for professional development by APLS, Alabama public libraries, and outside state libraries, there are numerous training opportunities available for library staff. However, as discussed in the challenge section, smaller, rural libraries are often understaffed and have limited time for professional development. One way to help solve the staffing challenge is to encourage volunteer or part-time work through community engagement. This could include involving city officials, Friends of the Library organizations, and diverse marketing techniques detailed below to help spread the word of the need for volunteers or part-time assistance. Having more people help run the libraries will free up the necessary time needed for professional development.

### **Diversify Marketing Techniques**

There are many ways to market and promote libraries. Traditional techniques such as word-of-mouth, newspapers, radio, and television can be used, but it is important to use exciting and impactful stories, catchy phrases, graphics, and quotes to capture the audience. The use of websites, newsletters, and social network sites can help increase public awareness of libraries. The key to using social media is to be persistent in posting information. This will ensure a better chance of people seeing the latest great things happening at the library. Some other marketing techniques include offering welcome packets to new library cardholders, library mementoes (pins, pads etc.), making a good first impression on children with a vibrant atmosphere, and keeping teens engaged by hosting workshops for special interests like fashion shows, robot building, and computer programming (6 Ways to Promote Your Library, n.d.). All these techniques can be utilized at little

to no costs and will help reach multiple generations. It is important to diversify and use multiple techniques to market your libraries.

## **Conclusion**

Alabama public libraries play a crucial role in serving their communities. They provide countless services beyond books and can impact all generations. APLS continues to successfully service these libraries through leadership, resources, and expertise. Although Alabama public libraries face challenges, such as funding, staffing/professional development, and marketing, these challenges can be overcome with implementation of the recommendations offered above in addition to the strategies that are already being used by APLS and public libraries. Through fostering relationships through library advocacy, a public partnership with state agencies for the RSR Program, community support of library staffing to increase professional development, and diversifying marketing techniques, Alabama public libraries have a bright future ahead in serving communities. The best way to emphasize the importance of public libraries is to celebrate and increase their ability to provide wide-ranging services to support and build communities.

*“When in doubt go to the library” J.K. Rowling*

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