A Report on Findings from the Public Library System Redesign Focus Groups

March 2018
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Table of Contents

Section 1: Purpose and Background .................................................................................. 1
   A. The Purpose of the Public Library System Redesign Focus Groups .................. 1
   B. Developing Focus Group Questions and Inviting Participants ..................... 1
   C. Conducting the Public Library Focus Groups .................................................. 1

Section 2: Key Focus Group Findings ............................................................................ 2
   1. Most Important Strength of Your Library System ........................................ 2
   2. Overall Effectiveness of Your Library System: 10-Point Scale ..................... 3
   3. Greatest Frustration with Your Library System ............................................. 5
   4. Structure of a Reimagined Model to Enable Your Library’s Voice ............... 6
   5. Best Measure of Effectiveness of a New Library Services Model ................ 6
   6. Overall Importance of Connecting with Other Libraries: 10-Point Scale ...... 7
   7. Ideas for Facilitating these Library Connections ........................................ 10
   8. Greatest Hope for a New Design ................................................................. 10
   9. Greatest Fear from a New Design ............................................................... 11

Section 3: Appendices .................................................................................................... 13
   Appendix A – Northeast Focus Group ................................................................. 14
   Appendix B – Northwest Focus Group ............................................................... 21
   Appendix C – South Central Focus Group .......................................................... 29
Section 1: Purpose and Background

A. The Purpose of the Public Library System Redesign Focus Groups

The Public Library System Redesign (PLSR) focus groups were part of a larger state-wide initiative to strengthen the array of support services to Wisconsin’s public libraries. The PLSR Steering Committee contracted with Russell Consulting, Inc. (RCI) to conduct a broad assessment of public library needs, perceptions, and expectations in respect to their current library system that provides them support services and what an ideal system might look like. This assessment included RCI conducting three focus groups and an online survey of all Wisconsin public libraries (reported separately).

The results from both the focus groups and the public library survey will be used by the PLSR Steering Committee and other key stakeholders to help guide their decision making as they consider the final design recommendations for the future of public library support services in Wisconsin.

B. Developing Focus Group Questions and Inviting Participants

RCI met with representatives from the PLSR Steering Committee to explore the array of issues that they wanted to investigate through the public library focus groups. Based upon these broad issues, RCI developed and shared an initial draft of focus group questions with the PLSR Steering Committee. Integrating feedback from the Steering Committee, RCI finalized the focus group questions.

To ensure geographic representation, three focus groups were scheduled: one in northeast Wisconsin, one in northwest Wisconsin, and one in south central Wisconsin. Participants for the focus groups were selected based upon a three step process: (1) the PLSR Steering Committee put out a call to all public libraries asking people to express their interest in attending one of the three focus groups (20 individuals expressed interest in the northeastern focus group; 24 in the northwestern focus group; and 41 in the south central focus group); (2) RCI pulled a random sample of 15 respondents from all interested individuals in each of the three areas; (3) finally, some adjustments in the final selection of focus group participants were made to ensure representativeness in both library size, library system, and additional variables such as if the individual had served on WLA committees, governance committees, and had experience with multiple library systems.

The PLSR e-mailed all selected focus group participants inviting them to their focus group.

C. Conducting the Public Library Focus Groups

RCI conducted the two-hour focus groups at the three locations. An effort was made to ask all three groups the same set of questions, with some variations based upon the number of participants and the facilitators following up on respondents’ comments and issues raised.
Section 2: Key Focus Group Findings

This section of the focus group report presents an overall summary across all focus groups for each of the focus group questions. Where there were themes or issues specific to a focus group, these will also be noted. Given the diversity of perspectives present for each focus group and time limitations, the facilitators did not attempt to achieve consensus for any of the questions.

See Appendices A, B, and C for more detailed summary notes from each of the three focus groups.

1. **Most Important Strength of Your Library System**

**Question:** What do you see as the most important strength in how your current library system operates in relation to your library and others in your region?

Overall strengths identified across all focus groups included:

- ILS
- Technology and technical support
- Communication
- Delivery
- Resource sharing
- Collaboration among libraries within the system
- Responsiveness to our needs

Unique strengths that emerged from specific focus groups or strengths that were especially emphasized included:

- **Northeast:** knowledgeable/competent staff; highly responsive; forward looking; allows each library to have its own identify while being part of the system; leveraging our resources; no evidence that our systems aren’t working for us now; we’re very cohesive within our system.

- **Northwest:** phenomenal staff; responsive and competent, passionate people; staff are stretched too thinly (often not able to provide on-site staff when needed); helping us with the homeless issue.

- **South Central:** great resource to new directors; responsive to our needs; great help with reporting; they have our back.
2. **Overall Effectiveness of Your Library System: 10-Point Scale**

**Question**: How would you rate the effectiveness of your current library system on a 1-10 point scale? (1 = not effective, 10 = extremely effective)

The average level of effectiveness across all focus groups was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast:</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwest:</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central:</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups Combined:</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.98</td>
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**Histogram of All Responses - All Focus Groups**

Scale: 1 = Not Effective to 10 = Very Effective
Key Focus Group Findings

Histogram of All Responses - Northeast Focus Group

Mean = 6.36
Std. Dev. = 2.061
N = 14

Scale: 1 = Not Effective to 10 = Very Effective

Histogram of All Responses - Northwest Focus Group

Mean = 8.41
Std. Dev. = 1.158
N = 11

Scale: 1 = Not Effective to 10 = Very Effective
Note: for the South Central focus group, only 7 of the 8 participants shared their effectiveness scores. The eighth person was both a library and system director and felt she couldn’t give an objective response.

3. Greatest Frustration with Your Library System

Question: What is the greatest source of frustration in how your current library system operates in relation to your library and others in your region?

Overall frustrations identified across all focus groups included:

- Lack of flexibility in ILS – unable to make changes to better suit individual libraries
- Technology and technical support more limited than desired
- Human resources and legal support non-existent to very limited
- Difficulties balancing the diverse needs of large and small libraries
- System can be reluctant to give up control/power/authority

Unique frustrations that emerged from specific focus groups or frustrations that were especially emphasized included:

- **Northeast**: geographical distances can create barriers to service; lack of technical competence in some ILS staff; some reluctance to innovate/take chances; some confusion as to how to work with libraries outside the system.
- **Northwest**: technical support staff competence and consistency; system cataloguing damaged books; lack of guidance and support on human resource issues.
• **South Central**: need for more competent, responsive, and consistent technical support staff; lack of ILS flexibility; better onboarding/orienting new directors.

4. **Structure of a Reimagined Model to Enable Your Library’s Voice**

**Question**: How should a reimagined model for supporting libraries be structured to enable your library to have a voice in the choice and priority of programs and services to support your library’s success?

Ideas for enabling a library’s voice in the system identified across all focus groups included:

- A regional structure that enables libraries with similar needs making decisions in a collaborative way
- Emphasis on local control – allowing libraries to serve their communities the best way that they can while leveraging regional or statewide resources (ILS, delivery, etc.)
- Regional structure allowing more local control-autonomy over decision making with a regional or statewide system that focuses on providing strong support services and consulting to meet these local library needs.

Unique approaches for enabling libraries’ voices that emerged from specific focus groups or ideas that were especially emphasized included:

- **Northeast**: collaborative discussions and decisions more useful than voting (either 1 library, one vote or weighted votes); regionalization enables local libraries with similar interests/needs to collaborate; the challenges even within regionalization of large/small and urban/rural libraries.

- **Northwest**: some desire to see statewide infrastructure such as ILS while enabling libraries to connect with and collaborate with other libraries of similar size and needs regardless of geographic location.

- **South Central**: strong desire to maintain the uniqueness of each library while benefiting from regional or statewide resources such as ILS, delivery, tech support; the state should fund local libraries to enable statewide equity in library services while letting each library decide how best to meet the local community’s need (CESA model was offered by someone as an example).

5. **Best Measure of Effectiveness of a New Library Services Model**

**Question**: What would be the best metric to gauge whether or not the new model that emerges from this process has accomplished the desired outcomes you’ve identified?

Ideas for measuring the effectiveness a new library services model identified across all focus groups included:

- Statewide service equity for library patrons
- Core services are provided by all libraries
- Library director and staff satisfaction with state/regional library support services
- Raising the standards for library services
- No library loses funding or services because of the new system (well-funded libraries expressed concerns about this)
Unique ideas for measuring model effectiveness that emerged from specific focus groups or ideas that were especially emphasized included:

- **Northeast**: patrons get the services that they want; decision making is fast, inclusive, responsive, transparent, and involves the whole state; equity is crucial; letting libraries pay for the services that they want.

- **Northwest**: statewide equity on a basic set of core library services; patron satisfaction before and after the change; library director/staff satisfaction with system services and support.

- **South Central**: baseline measures for core library services; there is difficulty in quantifying some library services; state money is divided based upon an array of factors: population, geographic area, level of local financial support, etc.

6. **Overall Importance of Connecting with Other Libraries: 10-Point Scale**

**Question**: How important is it for your library to connect with, share effective practices, share resources, etc. with other libraries in your region and throughout the state on a 10-point scale? (1 = not important, 10 = extremely important)

The average level of importance across all focus groups was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast:</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwest:</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central:</td>
<td>8.88</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups Combined:</td>
<td>9.20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Focus Group Findings
Key Focus Group Findings

Histogram of All Responses - Northwest Focus Group

- Mean = 9.60
- Std. Dev. = 4.59
- N = 11

Frequency

Importance

Scale: 1 = Not Important to 10 = Extremely Important

Histogram of All Responses - South Central Focus Group

- Mean = 8.88
- Std. Dev. = 1.26
- N = 6

Frequency

Importance

Scale: 1 = Not Important to 10 = Extremely Important
7. Ideas for Facilitating these Library Connections

Question: How might a new approach to helping facilitate these “library connection outcomes” work? Describe how this might be structured at the regional or statewide level to achieve these outcomes.

Ideas for facilitating library connections that were identified across all focus groups included:

- Fully leverage existing ways for connecting libraries, such as WLA and SRLAAW.
- Connecting should be actively encouraged locally, regionally, and across the state – bringing libraries together with shared needs, challenges, demographics, etc.
- CE programs are ideal for forging connections, irrespective of boundaries.
- Connections between libraries should be voluntary, based upon needs and desires, not mandated.
- Use technology (e.g. webinars) to facilitate connections for small libraries where directors and staff have a hard time getting away to attend connecting events (e.g., CEs, meetings, information sharing sessions, etc.).

Unique approaches for facilitating library connections that emerged from specific focus groups or ideas that were especially emphasized included:

- **Northeast:** having a strong leader or facilitator to make connections between libraries happen; enable smaller one-person libraries to connect with others via technology or substitute staffing support from the new system; bring libraries of similar size and geography together for purpose of connecting; encourage connections across the state – not just within geographic regions.

- **Northwest:** establish some sort of “welcoming” packet or buddy or mentoring system to help new directors connect with other library directors; support cross-boundary connections for education; leverage the power of WLA to forge connections; better leverage DPI resources and staff.

- **South Central:** we need local and regional meetings vs. statewide; fully utilize WLA for forging connections; encourage/allow voluntary connections; collaborate on CE and education across regional boundaries.

8. Greatest Hope for a New Design

Question: What is your greatest hope for a new design for regional or statewide services to support your library?

The “greatest hopes” identified across two focus groups included:

- Statewide library service equity without compromising quality.
- Raising the bar to help all libraries meet core service standards.
- Funding mechanism involving local and statewide sources that enable library service equity.

Unique “greatest hopes” that emerged from specific focus groups or hopes that were especially emphasized included:
• **Northeast**: Due to time constraints with the larger number of participants, this group was not asked this question.

• **Northwest**: service equity without lowering quality is fundamental hope; the challenge of funding service equity – especially for small and rural libraries that may lack local funding support; find efficiencies in services through consolidation/collaboration on such things as ILS and delivery.

• **South Central**: service equity without lowering quality was a fundamental hope expressed by all; a hope that there is courage to make the hard decisions to provide financial support for small libraries.

9. **Greatest Fear from a New Design**

**Question**: What is your greatest fear from such a new design?

The “greatest fears” identified across two focus groups included:

- That the funding required to raise the standards and ensure statewide library service equity won’t be made available.
- Smaller libraries will struggle to survive – due to funding issues
- Anxieties about preserving individual library identity and local focus within a new system where efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and service standards exert greater centralized control in service of service equity and cost control.

Unique “greatest fears” that emerged from specific focus groups or fears that were especially emphasized included:

- **Northeast**: Due to time constraints with the larger number of participants, this group was not asked this question.

- **Northwest**: smaller libraries will may lose if state funding isn’t sufficient; that nothing will change; anxieties about limitations on funding while striving to raise all libraries to statewide standards – and how this will be paid for; concerns about the impact on library and system staff.

- **South Central**: anxieties about the legislature defunding libraries in this process; concerns about the loss of local library identity if there is a centralized statewide system; fear of smaller libraries being shut down.

10. **How Fast Should the New Design be Implemented?**

**Question**: As the State of Wisconsin moves to consider and potentially embrace a new approach for providing support services to local libraries, how fast should it move to implement its recommended solution? Do it immediately or gradually shift to the new model?

The responses concerning the speed of implementation identified across two focus groups included:

- Do it right; take the time to roll it out thoughtfully.
- Implement gradually -- don’t rush to do it all at once; tackle the critical issues first.
- Give libraries and systems time to reflect upon what emerges from the PLSR process.
• Tackle the easy stuff first – collaboration on CEs, classes, and webinars and address the harder stuff (legislation, funding, ILS, etc.) over time.

Unique responses concerning the speed of implementation that emerged from specific focus groups or that were especially emphasized included:

• **Northeast**: Due to time constraints with the larger number of participants, this group was not asked this question.

• **Northwest**: take the time to do it right; roll it out gradually – starting with some core elements first; do the easy stuff first; do what can be done now and change laws over time to enable more actions; more cross-border cooperation and collaboration between systems.

• **South Central**: it all depends upon what comes out of the Steering Committee; take the time to do it right – but fast enough to address critical library needs now; concerns with the speed of the PLSR decision making process and with the workgroups and how they are approaching their work – will significantly impact what emerges.
Section 3: Appendices

This section presents a summary of the key issues raised by the participants in each of the three focus groups:

- **Appendix A** – Northeast Focus Group Summary
- **Appendix B** – Northwest Focus Group Summary
- **Appendix C** – South Central Focus Group Summary

**Note:** The purpose of the focus groups was to identify broad themes to drive decision making about a system redesign rather than surface specific problems or issues with individual libraries or library systems. Therefore, some of these summary notes (taken by both of the facilitators during the focus groups) have been edited by the facilitators to remove critical references to specific libraries and library systems, even while doing their best to preserve what appeared to be the intent of people’s comments. The facilitators regret any misinterpretation they may have made of anyone’s comments.
Appendix A – Northeast Focus Group

This focus group was held on January 9, 2018 at Kaukauna Public Library. Fourteen people participated, representing libraries located in nine library systems. The two-hour focus group was facilitated by Jeff and Linda Russell, Russell Consulting, Inc.

1. **What do you see as the most important strength in how your current library system operates in relation to your library and others in your region?**

   - Communication—get information—transparent.
   - Small system and responsive—we all have a seat at the table—we feel we have a voice, easier to reach consensus with only six libraries. Where you had a lot more people at the table, much harder to come to consensus.
   - I agree—responsiveness to our needs, able to reach consensus with fewer voices.
   - Provides access to ILS that libraries in our system couldn’t otherwise afford.
   - ILS joins us together.
   - The support they give us small libraries—can answer my questions or know how to get me an answer.
   - Twenty-nine libraries in our system—County libraries meet monthly and all of the libraries in my system meet five times/year. Good, frequent communication—gives me colleagues. Technical services, administration, ordering materials for small libraries. System and county fund that.
   - Thirty-five libraries, eight counties, all types of libraries, wide variety of library directors—Brown County Central is one of largest libraries in the state and we also have the smallest libraries in state. Largest geographical area. Our strength is that we make it work! Contract ILS with them.
   - Technology (ILS, computer services)—take all libraries’ perspectives into consideration. Diverse needs from large and small libraries. Responsive to those differences.
   - System is forward thinking. Technology is huge—they provide that. We’d have to contract that out otherwise and that would be pricier. They take care of ILS.
   - ILS, IT, software, database administrator. Tech support for ILS.
   - ILS—leveraging money so everyone gets more resources than they could afford individually (buying equipment).
   - My patrons get a huge resource selection—wouldn’t have that otherwise—access to statewide resources. It’s because of systems that we can share resources.
   - ILS resource sharing. Staff very knowledgeable, responsive. Help with problem solving, one-on-one consulting and with twenty-nine libraries as a group. It’s a team effort, focuses on supporting us.
• ILS, tech support--small libraries wouldn’t exist without systems. Everyone has a library they can go to.
• Delivery of resources, ILS. We couldn’t afford to do it alone.
• We all make the decisions together—it’s not top down from the system administrator.
• Better for patrons and staff.
• We’re all individual libraries. We’re not branches of one library.
• We’re cohesive because of systems.
• Makes technology work smoothly for us. You don’t have to have that expertise in your library. Having a system to support us allows us each to focus on our community.
• We can focus on our community because system has our back.
• System has our back—we don’t want to lose that capacity.
• My little library can have the same access to statewide resources for our patrons.
• We don’t want to lose our identity.
• Without delivery, small libraries would have nothing.
• There’s no evidence that system isn’t working for us. Continuing education could improve. I don’t see any reason why we’d want to change system.
• I don’t have the same positive perception of my system as you do of yours.

2. How would you rate the effectiveness of your current library system on a 1-10 point scale? (1 = not effective at all, 10 = extremely effective)

8, 7, 7, 6, 2, 4, 8, 6, 9, 7, 6, 3, 8, 8 (14 people, total of 89 points) = average of 6.36

3. What is the greatest source of frustration in how your current library system operates in relation to your library and others in your region?
• Consulting and admin services can be lacking at times—turnover in directors hasn’t helped.
• System could get better support and funding from the state – the state doesn’t understand and appreciate what system does for us.
• ILS—slow response to my needs for change. I want to be more empowered to make changes on my own to ILS to meet the needs of my library/patrons. Frustrating. People end up with things they didn’t want from ILS. I can’t enhance the ILS with CR software. Doesn’t allow me to get the fastest, best quality service.
• Organization and leadership. Clearer/stronger leadership.
• System needs better communication between libraries—there’s not a lot of anticipation of libraries’ needs, not proactive enough. There should’ve been more planning beforehand when the system was formed.
• We’re the most northern library in our system—we feel more adrift from the system. It’s a three hour commute round-trip to participate—hard to be part of
governance and committees, continuing ed. Bureaucratic—too many steps to get things done. Wanted to put a (named) program on our computers but it required approval from various committees—we gave up.

- Slow to give up power to the libraries. Lacking in innovation. Afraid to take chances, give up power. Cataloging—we’re finally able to put in our own titles but we had to ask to do that for a number of years. Another frustration is that we’re part of a consortium that is two systems—their functions aren’t clear to us—there’s blurred lines.

- There’s very blurred lines. Our system has eight counties but the largest one isn’t part of our ILS. It’s our resource library. Who do we go to for reference questions? We’re caught between two systems. We’re forced to contract for ILS services with (named) but we’re not an equal partner with them. We should have a vote on its board but don’t.

- We get a lot of money from (named) County. There’s tension with how to work with libraries outside of our system’s border. It’s a minor issue.

- I’m happy.

- We have twenty-nine libraries—seventy-five percent of our libraries are one-person libraries. Our system is financially broke, contracting out services. There’s a reduction of services to my library from our system. We don’t have a tech person. I end up helping the system rather than their helping me. Individual libraries in our system are having to provide more services which hurts everyone.

- Lack of ILS functionality. The consortium is completely inept at providing this to us. There needs to be a dedicated, academically and professionally prepared person to run ILS—it’s over people’s heads and we all suffer because of that. I do all I can to work around our consortium. We pay a fee for tech support from our consortium—we end up providing the system with tech support. I get one vote (there’s twenty-seven libraries). I pay a large percentage of the consortium’s budget. We need inventory capacity for all of my locations—we can’t get it. I’ve asked and asked for that for five years. I know ILS has that capacity but they’re not able to do it for us.

- Communication isn’t always consistent—things they don’t tell us, lack of direction in what they give us, follow through.

- Our system is small, which is a strength but it’s also a weakness. There’s a lack of funding to do additional things. We have to have our own tech support. We’re the resource library so we don’t get as much support from system.
4. How should a reimagined model for supporting libraries be structured to enable your library to have a voice in the choice and priority of programs and services to support your library’s success?

- We’ve been in two different governance structures—in one we had an equal vote, now it’s a tiered vote and pay by size. I don’t see any difference with the two structures. It all depends on you to speak up. Most of the time it’s consensus but sometimes there has to be a vote.

- We have conversations—general consensus or a majority. I don’t see it as casting a vote.

- Strong leadership is important. Each library has to maintain its individuality with its basic services—delivery, ILS—can’t be top-down. You have to be able to work with your community and respond to its needs.

- System and consortium are different entities. System—discussion, not votes. Consortium—has weighted votes by how much you pay and one vote formula.

- Need weighted votes (plus a formula?). (Named large library) can’t make decision on their own even though they are the largest and have the largest vote (because of a formula the system uses for voting??).

- Five counties. I like the model of monthly meetings by county where the libraries share their struggles and successes with representation from system informing them about what system is doing, thinking about. (This person went on to describe in some detail how they have multi-level meetings and discussions about issues in this system.)

- That’s very effective. System does the research and the committee of library directors makes the decision. We can have input without putting a lot of effort into it.

- Casual meetings (not decision making)—supportive meetings that work well for people to vent and hash out problems. Then there’s consortiums within systems and system to system meetings throughout state. Find the strengths of all of these different structures/approaches and massage those to meet as many criticisms as possible. We have to know what the problems are. I can’t find a list of problems that prompted PLSR—I need a targeted list!

- In Illinois, seventeen systems were reduced to two systems—it was done to them.

- Have three to five regions or systems—centralize everything, have delivery designed by real experts—professionally. Have real educators doing education. Make it all digitalized with no traveling. Align libraries of similar size with similar problems/concerns in that region. Consolidated services/functions. Get similar libraries together. We work around our consortium as much as possible because they want as little change as possible.

- A centralized, statewide structure won’t give everyone a voice. Regional is the way to go to equally distribute resources.

- I’ve worked in large and small libraries—they have very different needs. I want to go to libraries of similar size within a region.
- I don’t want to be grouped with Brown County, Milwaukee or Madison—smaller libraries could lose their voice. Geographically regionalizing could work against you in some higher population areas. Fear of similar libraries losing their voice in a larger library system (regionalized). Need a balance of small and large library perspectives.

- I would be wary that you would lose conversation by going much larger with (regional) systems. That’s the point of WLA and building relationships in professional settings like that. WLA helps us network with similar libraries and share ideas. We don’t need to have same ILS system to have a conversation.

- I agree but collaboration doesn’t just happen. I have peers and we’ve gotten together to share ideas. I want to help ALL of us be better.

- We don’t have to all do things the same way. Not all or none. Why can’t we have one single ILS? Pick one software package?

- Regionalize continuing ed, bigger things. One ILS makes sense. I want to be able to make smaller decisions on a local level—what we want to do for cataloguing, rental, lucky days, etc.—have a tiered approach.

- In Illinois, they didn’t get a choice of dividing up the state.

5. **What would be the best metric to gauge whether or not the new model that emerges from this process has accomplished the desired outcomes you’ve identified?**

- Better for patrons.
- Patrons not confused.
- Shared ILS works, share delivery, continuing education—those are easy decisions, Still need autonomy for smaller things.
- Success is having 100% input.
- How are we doing now—how are systems working? Are there any metrics being used now? How will we know if it’s improving?
- We don’t have any measures, metrics. Patron satisfaction? CEU for library staff?
- I will still be able to offer my patrons what they want/the services I have now, if not more and I won’t have to cut my budget.
- Be able to sequester off a part of my budget for local control.
- I don’t want to be paying more for the same services. I don’t want to lose services. Equalize ILS, tech support, CE, etc. for all libraries—have equity of library services across the state. No reduction in services/support.
- Don’t pay for what you can’t/don’t use—be able to opt in and out on some things.
- Same quality or better quality of services—tech support, ILS. Core set of services plus add-on’s.
- A core set of services—what would that be?
• Systems currently vary as much as libraries. Should standardize this—ILS person, tech support person—all systems should have this. Important to have the education and training to provide good service to libraries.

• I agree. All should have staff who are dedicated and trained.

• We have a great opportunity to start over and be forward thinking here with PLSR—think beyond to the years 2025-2030—let’s be excellent with this effort.

• The PLSR is hitting some “sticky points”—the process needs to be more transparent. I’m concerned about this failing, not being successful.

• Let’s all work together and figure it out together as equal partners. There’s a power dynamic with large libraries like Madison, i.e., it’s smart of you to follow our way of thinking.

• PLSR talks but they don’t make decisions. That’s my biggest frustration. PLSR has been talking for three years with no decisions being made or models developed.

• Give us a model to respond to here!! Tell us what the decision is and why it was made.

• **Facilitator’s Summary:** It sounds like one metric would be that decision making process is fast, responsive, inclusive, involves the whole state, transparent, reasoning behind the decision is clear, good leadership who has been participating in the process: “I’ve heard what you’ve all said and now we’re going to move forward on this path.”

• This model will go to Tony Evers and then he’ll study it. This PLSR group can only make a recommendation, they can’t make a decision.

• I’m disappointed that they’re not willing to tear it down and start all over. Give us a model to react to.

6. **How important is it for your library to connect with, share effective practices, share resources, etc. with other libraries in your region and throughout the state on a 10-point scale? (1 = not important at all, 10 = extremely important)**

   10, 6, 8, 8, 9, 9, 10, 9, 8, 8, 10, 10, 10, 10 (14 people, total of 125 points) = average of 8.93

7. **How might a new approach to helping facilitate these “library connection outcomes” work? Describe how this might be structured at the regional or statewide level to achieve these outcomes.**

   • Need a liaison between libraries—at system or regional level—facilitator between libraries, system, government entities.
   
   • Need to have good strong leaders in systems—if they aren’t, need a way to evaluate them—have accountability. Need leadership to develop strong connections—able to facilitate conversations. Able to work with legislative advocates.
   
   • Need a standard to hold leadership accountable.
• Nice to meet with libraries of the same size and background—SRLAAW. Also meet geographically, locally.

• It’s hard for staff at small libraries to leave for meetings—need another way of connecting with other people.

• It’s lonely to be a director or only staff member.

• Hire a group of substitute librarians to allow small library directors to connect.

• Even though we make some meetings mandatory we never see some directors—so they don’t know about new policies, changes.

• Have more meetings for same size libraries—have a track for that at the WLA Conference?

• Everyone has to “play the game”—some libraries don’t play the game (meet with other libraries in their system). Everyone should be in the game. Stop having regional boundaries so we could make more connections across boundaries, attend continuing ed classes offered by other systems. We’re currently not supposed to do that.
Appendix B – Northwest Focus Group

This focus group was held on January 10, 2018 at the Rice Lake Public Library. Eleven people participated, representing libraries located in six library systems. The two-hour focus group was facilitated by Jeff and Linda Russell, Russell Consulting, Inc.

1. What do you see as the most important strength in how your current library system operates in relation to your library and others in your region?
   - Collaboration among libraries in the system facilitated by the system—we come together. The best interests of everyone are really considered.
   - I agree. The core staff are phenomenal with what they do for us with the number of people they have.
   - Continuing education, system consultants.
   - Responsive communication. System is stretched thin with technology and Wi-Fi. One library was down for three weeks. Need a better response time.
   - System is excellent. Education via webinar to reduce travel. Sensitive to people’s lack of money and how to best address needs without it.
   - Resourcefulness with tight budget. Try to give time and attention to us on a shoestring.
   - Availability—support staff is very stretched. Very responsive—I’ll have an answer to a question by the end of the day, usually within three hours. IT problems resolved within a couple of days max—usually sooner.
   - Same as the others. I’m in the middle of nowhere. The system provides technical services, consultants, continuing ed. I couldn’t get that anywhere else.
   - Collaboration among library directors in my system. There’s a sense of a community among the library directors. Sharing of ideas—programming, staffing, system tech support – system understands our network. We couldn’t get help anywhere else.
   - Depth of knowledge of system staff. Tech issues. They’re there for us. I generally receive immediate tech support.
   - Facilitator’s Summary: In summary: accessible, competent staff who are responsive, dependable, they have your back—only a phone call away. System staff are, however, stretched too thinly with limited resources.
   - Positive, passionate staff who want to support us. We need someone physically on site—that’s an issue.
   - The homeless issue—system has helped provide us with resources. Having someone to call is huge, having someone you know is huge. System created a poverty task force.
2. How would you rate the effectiveness of your current library system on a 1-10 point scale? (1 = not effective at all, 10 = extremely effective)

9, 9, 9, 8, 9.5, 9, 7, 8, 10, 6 (11 people, total of 92.5 points) = average of 8.41

3. What is the greatest source of frustration in how your current library system operates in relation to your library and others in your region?

- System person sharing their perception of a (specific) situation at my library when it’s not their issue or decision.
- Continuing education could be strengthened by our system providing webinar access.
- The ability to be proactive—perhaps it’s a staffing issue with them. Want them to be more forward-looking—they’re trying to keep up, but they’re just catching up on things—never getting new stuff done.
- They’re so supportive of me as a new director. They’ve been very proactive.
- We haven’t had a system director for a year. I have frustrations with system staff. They don’t have a person dedicated to technology support. Too much system time allocated for cataloguing at my library—I have to pay for that. Meanwhile technology feels out of control—we need more help there. Standards seem to be different for system staff and library staff, e.g., cataloguing.
- There are times when I request something to be fixed outside of standard requests (e.g., tech or cataloguing problems) but I’m told by system “We can’t see the problem.” They’re questioning whether I’m seeing the tech problem that I’m complaining about. I want coherent answers.
- We pay additional funds for shared cataloguing, materials processing—they process materials very slowly. We’re not getting the quality in processing of materials. If a book is damaged, that troubles me. I don’t want to pay for that, which I’ll have to if they process the book without checking it first for damage. Everything else is fine.
- I want a physical presence from system within a week.
- We can’t do cataloguing in our system. There’s a lot of effort to standardize everything in ILS within our system. Should have some flexibility. There are needs for individuality as a library—e.g., establish your own fine level.
- The voting structure during Directors Council is hard to deal with. It’s a weighted vote based on library size/funding level and my vote doesn’t count for anything so I can’t influence the decision. Collectively, small libraries have a difficult time influencing the voting process.
- In our system, we have one vote, one member.
- Cataloguing by the system—we’ve received damaged items we didn’t know about until afterwards. I’ve also had system say that they don’t understand my question.
- I don’t get guidance in Human Resources (HR)—I didn’t know how to hire and fire. I had a lot of staffing issues as a new director—it was very frustrating.
They don’t teach that in library school. The City and County have given me my HR training. Give me a day on an HR webinar. [Note: Lots of nodding heads around the table]

I had to fire someone. The City did the work for me, completed the forms. It was awesome.

I’m googling HR issues -- I spend so much time trying to figure things out on my own. My City and County referred me to each other with my questions.

System should have an HR person on staff, there’s nothing through DPI either. The systems could share someone.

I get it through my City.

4. How should a reimagined model for supporting libraries be structured to enable your library to have a voice in the choice and priority of programs and services to support your library’s success?

- One library, one vote, especially if they consolidate systems.
- Madison and Milwaukee could be overwhelmed by the rest of us.
- Have a bilateral system—weighted system plus one library, one vote system—two voting options. Vote a second time with weighted vote (population, circulation). See what the results from both votes are—the allocation of services, inter-library loans, etc.
- (Named) system had a complicated voting system—worked well for money issues.
- If there’s great disparity between the two votes, should have to keep discussing that issue and look for a different solution.
- If we have one system (one library card) for the state (shared ILS, principles, rules, policies) and vote across the state, that would be too big for all of the directors to get together. I’m worried that we would lose those relationships between local directors that are so important.
- We do have one library, one vote in my system. Smaller libraries have a stronger voice. Bigger libraries lose some of their voice in the system with that voting process but they’re already more independent because they can afford specialists—the smaller libraries need that support from the System. We (the smaller libraries) are already impacted by some of the larger libraries’ decisions, (e.g. their policies on fines).
- Regionally we’re very different. I’m more like libraries nearby who are in a different system. Group by commonalities, not geography. Cross system lines, e.g., I don’t need money for English as a Second Language or homelessness, as other libraries do. I need money for my issues such as I have the only Wi-Fi in town.
- I think of the state as one house with rooms. All of the rooms have to function well in terms of basic things like heat, electricity, etc. but the bedroom doesn’t need a stove.
• My library has a homeless issue—other libraries in my system don’t have that problem so I don’t go to my system for help with that issue.

• **Facilitator’s Summary:** You’re saying that systems are arbitrary boundaries and barriers that don’t really facilitate collaboration, information sharing, helping each other out with other libraries that have the same issues as you. Does this make the case to have one ILS?

• It’s better for me (as a small northern library) to collaborate with another small northern library (in another system). Have one ILS—but allow for regional differences.

• I agree. I can’t charge a dollar for an overdue book—I’d get lynched. It needs to be regionally sensitive.

• I agree that the services need to be regionally sensitive. That’s what the patrons see. We’re the only place in town offering a fax service.

• I’m stretched too thin—I can’t pay attention to what’s happening on the statewide level—hard to be engaged on decision making because I’m dealing with patrons.

• I don’t have time to read about and respond intelligently to the crisis of the week (statewide).

• I really like those legislative form letters that we get—I can read them and then just click on “send.”

5. **What would be the best metric to gauge whether or not the new model that emerges from this process has accomplished the desired outcomes you’ve identified?**

• Have structured goals—what are we trying to accomplish with this process? Creating a shared ILS or are we consolidating systems more for our libraries and less for our patrons? Will this work for this? Yes, no, maybe? I haven’t heard anything concrete about what is the end goal of this process?

• Statewide ILS—Yes, I got my materials within one week ninety percent of the time. Easily measurable. Providing an online workshop regarding adult programming—forty-five percent of libraries attend/watch—that percent doesn’t measure success. Participants could be multi-tasking while watching. How do you consistently measure success of the application of that webinar/information?

• Equity is one of the pushes for redesign—so measure how equitable the service model is statewide—I don’t know how—have standards for basic services and have state support for those services. Patrons’ expectations should be that they’ll get same basic services at each library. Problem is that budgets vary between libraries.

• Patrons should have the right to have expectations for certain basic services, regardless of the library.

• Should have consistent service to patrons throughout the state.
• Measure the satisfaction of patrons before and after the redesign—equity in patron satisfaction would be the goal.

• How happy are the library directors and the patrons? It’s a balance between the staff and patrons. Staff can’t be working twice as hard to keep patrons satisfied.

• Core standard services—they should be equitable between Milwaukee and Superior—e.g., Wi-Fi speed.

6. How important is it for your library to connect with, share effective practices, share resources, etc. with other libraries in your region and throughout the state on a 10-point scale (1 = not important at all, 10 = extremely important).

8.75, 10, 10, 9, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10, 10 (11 people, 107.75 points) = average of 9.8

7. How might a new approach to helping facilitate these “library connection outcomes” work? Describe how this might be structured at the regional or statewide level to achieve these outcomes.

• Centralized database—make webinar accessible to all systems.

• WAPL is recommending “welcome packet” for new directors—an ambassador for new directors—personal relationships. Orientation. We’re just volunteers at WAPL—this needs to be organized system-wide for everyone.

• Buddy system or partnership or friendly face.

• Everyone should get welcomed, see a friendly face.

• Mentorship, buddy system.

• Make that a normal thing to have.

• Need face-to-face organizational opportunities, not just webinars.

• Other systems invite us to their educational events—I wouldn’t know otherwise. Encourage attending anything any system is sponsoring.

• Support cross-boundaries interaction, participation. Libraries close to each other may never talk because they’re in different systems. Don’t need to have organized meetings but should be encouraged to cross boundaries and meet others. Blur these financially determined lines and allow people to participate in each other’s events, classes.

• I don’t feel as connected as when we were on Listserv—felt more like a community.

• Yes, encourage blurring the lines.

• WLA—find way to get to know each other regionally at conferences—more regional discussions.

• Have structured regional discussions at WLA conference—make that an option.

• The desire for communication is overarching, staying connected at all levels. With Google instead of Listserv there’s some disconnect.
• Need to know who to talk to at DPI—we tend to stop at system with questions. Need a cheat sheet.
• We’re encouraged not to contact DPI—we’re supposed to follow the chain of command.
• I know system, I don’t know DPI—I would hesitate to contact DPI.
• **Facilitator’s Summary**: It seems that you’re saying that we need to strengthen those connections with libraries of your size in other systems, encouraging attendance at conferences and classes offered in other systems—having opportunities to get to know other people. These should be important aspect of any new structure.

8. **What is your greatest hope for a new design for regional or statewide services to support your library?**

• Equity.
• I’m getting great service. I want everyone to get that. I want that to continue. Raise us all to the same level.
• We can all be brought up to the same level without me having to pay more. Am I going to be forced to pay for service I don’t need?
• Feel less isolated, faster delivery of services (delivery, tech support), feel closer to the center.
• Core services that everyone has access to—more similarities between systems than the differences we have now.
• Equity—same level of services for all libraries and their patrons.
• I agree. I hope my services will stay where they are or improve. My fear is that we’ll have to pay more to accomplish that.
• How will we get our funding agencies on board—City/County? Regional infighting is a barrier to all municipal services. Hope we can work together on this.
• Equity—goal that needs to be reached. All libraries should have the same services. Will the different levels of government step up to fund this?
• Not always a choice by City—state has strict levy limits. A state leadership issue. They’re not pro-library.
• Greater efficiencies in my library. Can we rise to that level of service with the resources that we have? (e.g. every day delivery)
• Library community will need to have a perspective of the greater good. Some libraries may have to make some sacrifices so that another library can have service – urban communities have tax dollars.
• Leverage our dollars through consolidation to make ourselves more efficient, through shared delivery company, shared ILS. At the system level, it’s been very difficult to agree on how much to charge for fines, how many days considered to be overdue.

9. **What is your greatest fear for such a new design?**
• Smaller libraries will close and get squeezed out based on how funding model breaks down because small libraries can’t provide equitable service. Can communities that are physically close to each other come together and consolidate small libraries? No one wants to share. Hope we can work together.
• Small communities’ libraries will get squeezed out if funding formulas shift.
• We can’t look beyond where we’ve been to what could be—letting go, looking forward. Re-think what the community library is.
• Nothing will happen, nothing will change as a result of all of this.
• A change will be forced upon us if we don’t make a change for ourselves. I’d like us to be strategic. I’m worried about the impact on my staff and patrons.
• Whatever it turns out to be, I’ll work well with others and cooperate. But I want it to be MY library because that’s what my patrons like and expect. That’s why I get the donations that I get and the thirty volunteers I have because my patrons like what we have. Have the same standards but I want my library to still have its own heart and soul. It’ll be equitable but recognize that we all have different values, mission statements—individualistic. We all have different targets.
• Process will create more divisiveness (funding issues) than make things better. Having people fighting on statewide level would be incredibly detrimental to the public’s view of libraries. We would sound like a bunch of eight year olds fighting on the playground. I have a vision of it totally backfiring.
• I’m already hearing about systems worrying/complaining about the possibility of losing their services to help other systems—we don’t need infighting, backbiting.
• I don’t want to lose my services but we have to be cooperative. Need to find a way to make it work. I understand the big libraries not wanting to lose what they have.
• Funding—my city has issues with sharing money—will have to address that and solve those issues.
• Don’t cost me more!

10. As the State of Wisconsin moves to consider and potentially embrace a new approach for providing support services to local libraries, how fast should it move to implement its recommended solution? Do it immediately or gradually shift to the new model?
• Give it the time it needs to do it right.
• I agree. Move forward organically. Address the most desperate need first and allow that to settle and then add the next layer/change. Don’t make the layers or changes too quickly.
• Prioritize—what can be implemented faster, e.g., delivery.
• Changing laws will take forever—what can we change now without changing laws first—e.g., resource libraries?
• Do the easy stuff first (e.g., offer continuing ed online).
• More cooperation between systems—centralized (what?).
• Consolidating schools in my area—could make a lot of necessary changes without formally consolidating. Same would be true for libraries. Could do some things quickly like CE without changing system structure—it will be slow overall.
• Do the easy stuff first. Cross borders—classes, CE resources.
• More cooperation between systems as they currently exist without waiting for formal changes in structure, e.g., centralized webinar archive.
• **Facilitator’s Summary:** You’re all suggesting to move quickly on the low-hanging fruit. Do the harder stuff (requiring money, legislature) when it’s the right time.
• It eventually comes down to money. If it moves forward, what would you be willing to give up for another library?
• Use volunteers like I do.
• What are people (larger libraries) willing to give up for the greater good?
Appendix C – South Central Focus Group

This focus group was held on January 11, 2018 at the Hawthorne Branch of the Madison Public Library. Eight people participated, representing libraries located in five library systems. The two-hour focus group was facilitated by Jeff and Linda Russell, Russell Consulting, Inc. [Note: Unfortunately, there was a winter weather advisory for southern Wisconsin the afternoon this focus group was held, which likely had some impact on attendance.]

1. What do you see as the most important strength in how your current library system operates in relation to your library and others in your region?
   - System was a very helpful resource to me as a new library director. Our system operates very well. Builds relationships with counties.
   - Tech support and delivery (moving materials).
   - Delivery.
   - Support, guidance, resources to me as a new director. The directors bounce ideas off each other—we have good rapport as a group. Delivery.
   - Delivery is a great asset. Pleased with the support I receive through the consulting services they provide. Annual reporting is made pretty easy by our system. Tech support, tools that help us with cost saving.
   - They help us with detailed and original cataloguing. They’re always there and very prompt with answers.
   - They run our ILS—we have a large population, fifteen municipalities, complex system—our ILS operates at high level of quality, highly efficient, very competent. Facilitates cost sharing of resources that we all aspire to—fosters sharing of resources/collaboration.
   - I agree with all of this. ILS is huge and resource sharing—collective buy-in to that is very important to us. Main role for the system now.
   - **Facilitator’s Summary:** You’re all saying that your systems have your back; they offer broad support, assist with technology, are responsive to your needs, and provide strong ILS and delivery.

2. How would you rate the effectiveness of your current library system on a 1-10 point scale? (1 = not effective at all, 10 = extremely effective)
   - 9, 8, 6, 4, 5, 9, 9 (one person abstained because wears two hats—library and system director) (7 people, 50 points) = average of 7.14

3. What is the greatest source of frustration in how your current library system operates in relation to your library and others in your region?
   - The system is an afterthought for me because I also run the system, in addition to my library. There’s only one other library in my system. I run a large library plus our system. Our structure is all wrong—too much for one person to run a large library with four locations plus our system.
- We’re beset by political divisions, socio-economic funding divisions—the legacy of that continues—such diverse needs—how to meet them all? Healthy rivalry but very challenging to meet such diverse needs.
- Have more tech help in all regards—a permanent person would be great. Another ILS person is needed.
- Responsiveness—does a good job of allowing uniqueness and not afraid to help individual libraries get funding to go where they want to go. Could be a little more active and responsive so we’d be better equipped, confident to deal with our local governments, articulate how we want grow our libraries in the direction we want to go. It takes money to do that.
- Technology is a big problem—lack of support, updated stuff. The system staff’s effectiveness is not up to par. Their knowledge is not up to date. There’s a lack of budget to move forward with things that we need. We’re trying to stay up with the times in the direction libraries heading but it’s hard to scrape up the money we need to try out our new ideas.
- I agree. ILS doesn’t work properly for us and our patrons. It’s pretty much Wiscat. It’s hard to train staff, to be reliable for the patrons. The system ILS support staff aren’t knowledgeable. Other directors help each other out and pick up the slack. They know more about how to work ILS than system staff. The only way I find out what I don’t know is when I do things wrong.
- My system wants to make everyone (large and smaller libraries) work the same way, particularly on ILS, lending policies but other things too—wants uniformity. Not honoring local values (ILS, lending policies), control, authority. Conformity makes it easier to manage. Some libraries need everything, others can be very independent. There’s not a good balance between local and system control. The system doesn’t know about begging for money locally. ILS has imposed rules that don’t work in some situations—they’ve forgotten or don’t have that frontline experience. They’re somewhat out of touch with the real world.
- Overall, I’m happy and satisfied with my system. I needed more training right away when I was new. It came too slowly. I didn’t know the how’s and why’s of how to run a library.
- **Facilitator’s Question**: Do your systems offer an orientation for new directors?
- None!! Other library directors mentored us. ILS is counter-intuitive. My MS degree and library professional experience helped.
- We drastically need a better orientation system. There aren’t system staff to do that. Those not from the library world (MS degree) really need training/orientation—system couldn’t help. People don’t have the time to give you the training and support you need as a new director who’s not from the library world.
- There’s nothing formal. System gives you a hand, pairing you with a mentor. Boot camp done at the state level. Boot camp not helpful if too new in your position as a director.
- A little more assistance would’ve been helpful. More of an issue for smaller libraries. Boot camp is overwhelming.
• I needed more hand-holding as a new director. The assumption is that you know Wisconsin even if you haven’t lived and worked here.

• Most professionals have to self-train. That’s just the expectation of professionals—teach yourself.

• The state needs to give MORE support on legal issues.

• I need to take appropriate care of the taxpayers’ money—I can’t just teach myself.

• It’s not just one or the other—we do need a training structure in place. Otherwise, things get done wrong, knowledge gets lost, and the institution suffers.

4. **How should a reimagined model for supporting libraries be structured to enable your library to have a voice in the choice and priority of programs and services to support your library’s success?**

• I don’t see any need to have a bigger voice than I already have (as a large library).

• Libraries need to be responsive to communities and understand their needs. Having larger governance structures isn’t aligned with local control. Libraries will be undermined in their ability to serve their individual, unique, quirky communities. State control is expanded through this process. I am sympathetic to efficiencies and improvements that could come from uniformity. I see a need for the state to provide money to support smaller communities’ achieving equity with libraries. The state provides support for teacher pay in smaller rural communities that have insufficient funding and can’t retain teachers. Look at that as a model for libraries.

• I don’t know what the structure would look like. Local authority is special. I know my system people—I see them monthly, we have a relationship. They serve local communities and don’t second-guess them. Where’s the fun in everything being the same?

• Keep our uniqueness. Systems can help tell the story of local libraries and what we do/provide for our communities—providing great collections, programs that enrich lives, life-long learning, space to gather. Find way to give us more money and let us allocate that based upon our communities’ needs.

• Don’t make everyone the same. Delivery, tech support—make things similar for at least localized areas, if not statewide, e.g., speeding up delivery. We have three-day delivery now and my patrons were very happy to get that—faster would be even better like some other libraries have. I like having a face to associate with a name with system staff. Would I know who I’m talking to if I’m dealing with the state? I want a local/regional person that I can go to who understands my situation/library. I agree that our needs vary by size of the community.

• Get the house in order with the fundamental, structural stuff and then can be more flexible in other areas—tailored to our community. The more stable we are, the more flexible we can be, able to give our library its own character. Proper leadership and support staff. Consistency, uniformity—ILS, tech support,
leadership. Provide me with a strong structure and better support. Then I could wear fewer hats and feel more comfortable in my job.

- It comes down to a fundamental issue—how to enable small libraries to afford services to ensure statewide equity in basic services—delivery, access to speedy internet? The state needs to fund that and provide staff to make sure that happens. Then local libraries could go above and beyond that if they wished to. The CESA structure might be a model to look at. It’s regional and you buy what you want, using state money up to a certain level.

- I like that idea—choose what services you’d like to buy.

- I like that equalizer bar—ways to bring up some libraries—one vote AND weighted.

- There has to be political will to support equity.

- I agree with what everyone else is saying. I fear losing local control with a statewide system. Lose relationship building. Where would our boards fit in? We don’t want to lose what we have—relationships, advocacy—bring others up but don’t bring us down.

- Don’t lower baseline, then have local control.

- What is the baseline?

- I don’t want to lower the baseline just to get equity.

- In Colorado, they lost their systems, made it all focused at the state level. It worked very well for them and local control didn’t go away. What level of governance do you want?

- I want flexibility in some areas (collections, lending policies) while agreeing to uniformity with ILS—what’s the best I can buy? I would turn over tech to system if I could as long as it’s reliable.

- System provides consulting services, not governance. The only governance they have is to enforce standards, certification.

- If a library is out of compliance, they need to be able to take action.

5. **What would be the best metric to gauge whether or not the new model that emerges from this process has accomplished the desired outcomes you’ve identified?**

- Every library meets a baseline—fast internet, ILS, etc. The rest is up to you.

- If local boards signed up for the new model—not a good model if people don’t want to sign up for it.

- No internet speed is included on annual report, delivery not quantified.

- Lot of library services aren’t quantifiable. I have a hard time with this.

- The average would rise for how people feel about their system. How will resources be allocated—will rural areas get more resources to raise them up?
• Quality vs equity—how to bring your rural area up to a good solid quality level—you’re underfunded through per capita system because you don’t have the population.
• The way state money is divided up is based upon system population, geographic areas, expenditures.
• My community can’t get more money because it’s not growing—levy limitation—we’re in this bind.
• Cities are in the same boat—I can’t spend more than 1% because of the state levy limit—extremely restrictive—all of our other contracts rising.
• **Facilitator’s Summary**: So it seems that if one measure is equity of services, the shadow of funding hovers over everything—it influences whether that metric will be achieved or not.
• Identify core services, aspirational services—how many were you able to achieve this year—have a baseline.
• Where is that baseline? List of core services—are you at that level?
• Someone should come up with that list. Are you at that level? How much efficiency did you achieve in the pool of services that fed the equity? If everyone bought into the same ILS statewide, the cost savings could raise the baseline, equity level. That kind of resource sharing could help everyone achieve equity.
• Having that access would change things drastically. Level the playing field.
• Revise the state standards (based on averages).
• Not enforced. The current standards are too low.
• Does lowering the bar lower aspirations?

6. How important is it for your library to connect with, share effective practices, share resources, etc. with other libraries in your region and throughout the state on a 10-point scale (1 = not important at all, 10 = extremely important). Describe the ideal outcomes of what “connecting with other libraries” would look like.
   10, 10, 10, 9, 7, 9, 8, 8 (8 people, total points of 71) = average of 8.88

7. How might a new approach to helping facilitate these “library connection outcomes” work? Describe how this might be structured at the regional or statewide level to achieve these outcomes.
   • Convince my alders to fund an initiative—this is what excellent peer libraries are doing.
   • It can’t be a statewide thing—we need regional meetings to forge connections, share information, help our communities work together.
   • I agree—local input and control, not statewide run.
   • I agree.
• Our system doesn’t have networking opportunities—(named) County library directors meet bi-monthly. WLA gives us opportunities to network with peers. It’s not up to the system to get us connecting and sharing. Our system meets four times/year to share information with us, etc., not to network.

• I don’t know in terms of networking, sharing. My in-box is too full now.

• CE—local is best. Collaboration and programs – we can figure out.

• We created our own models. I don’t see the merit of systems. My system shares with other systems in our area -- we choose our own partners upfront. Contiguous—works well. ILS. cont ed—six systems pay into one cont ed consortium. Works great—we go across systems to partner with each other. We get cheaper services with this partnering. We’re getting regional on our own. The beauty of our system sharing with two other systems is that we’re getting our money from the State and County instead of having it come out of my budget. I don’t need them for anything else.

• The key thing here is the fact that it’s voluntary—joining larger units of service together, as it meets your needs and is under your control—self-initiated, locally controlled. PLSR seems to be moving in direction of voluntary and incentives to join larger units of service. That’s a very important component.

8. What is your greatest hope for a new design for regional or statewide services to support your library?

• Bring libraries’ statewide up to the bar—help small libraries with funding and technology to get to the baseline first.

• Ensure that we’re funded properly.

• Help others so that there’s equity for all (so I’m not hearing about libraries who can’t get daily delivery services).

• Equity for all libraries and patrons without lowering quality of services in any region.

• I agree. Equity without compromising quality. Everyone should succeed—I want the public to believe in public libraries and all patrons to have a great experience no matter whatever library they use.

• I agree.

• I agree.

• I agree. I hope there’s courage to make hard decisions regarding the financial resources to help small libraries—there may have to be some trade-offs.

9. What is your greatest fear for such a new design?

• I don’t want things to get worse, i.e., I have to pay more and get less.

• That the Legislature will mess this up or decide to defund systems.

• I agree. That they’ll steal from those of us where it’s working well and our level of service goes down for our patrons.
• That they’ll defund us like Illinois did. There’s no place else to get that money. Blow up the systems and lose state money. We can’t get the funds from the cities because of the spending caps.

• That we’ll end up with a large state-dominated bureaucracy that mandates in the name of efficiency, cost-effectiveness, equity, blindly imposing goals on us, and we lose community relationships that we’ve fought so hard to develop.

• I agree—create “McDonalds libraries.”

• Seeing libraries and jobs disappear.

• I agree. I fear that smallish libraries will be shut down.

• **Facilitator’s Summary:** The question seems to be: with fixed resources, how do we get equity? There seems to be some anxiety about (some) libraries being shut down.

10. **As the State of Wisconsin moves to consider and potentially embrace a new approach for providing support services to local libraries, how fast should it move to implement its recommended solution? Do it immediately or gradually shift to the new model?**

• Enough time to enable systems/libraries to deliberate—do they want to join up? Fast enough to help the libraries that are suffering.

• Some things will have to happen quickly—tech-related, ILS.

• Hurry up with showing us the model so we can all vet it. We don’t know what we’re critiquing. Actual implementation might be a five-year plan.

• Depends upon what the model/plan is.

• Can give us money right away!

• Don’t push too quickly, things might be lost, not considered. Might be more efficient to be one ILS.

• Takes a year to do a database migration from one ILS to another.

• Don’t have change just to have change. Timeline seems too quick for Steering Committee (SC) looking at the results of the workgroups—the SC and/or we may not like what the workgroups have come up with but the short timeline may force them/us to accept workgroup recommendations even if we/they don’t like them. Who’s steering the ship? Fear the SC will just rubberstamp the workgroups’ output due to lack of time.

• Questions the workgroups’ output—e.g, overnight service to some very rural areas not realistic. Hard to do all of that planning in the abstract—where will the money be coming from?

• We don’t know what the plan is—continue to watch the workgroups closely and provide input, oversee what’s important to you. What we’re hearing is pretty cryptic—we don’t know what the workgroups are actually coming up with, deciding.
• The workgroups seem to be working in silos—how will they be connected? The Steering Committee can do that??!
• The workgroups are looking at the ideal—they weren’t supposed to consider budget