July 20, 2018

Dear fellow PLSR participants,

After over 30 years of work in Wisconsin library systems and approaching the end of my career, I was excited to see the PLSR process take place. Now that we are approaching the finish line it’s important that we not stumble before crossing the line. It seems to me that the plans we are considering get us close to the goal, but neither is quite there. Below are some idea that might move us closer to merging the best of the two plans and of the current structure.

**Finance:** The plan W suggestion for changing the formula for distribution of aid appears to be a real contribution toward making funding more equitable. However it seems to require an increase in overall aid if we are to avoid taking from some systems to increase funding to others. I’d propose that the legal changes necessary to make the new funding formula possible be adopted, but implementation be delayed until increased funding ensures no current system is negatively impacted.

**System realignment:** From the beginning of my work in library systems it was clear to me that it was not possible to have an equitable structure when there was such a vast difference between the size and makeup of individual systems. There is no way to compare a system with 10 counties to a one-county system or one with 50 members to one with 10. Therefore the Plan Y requirement that the number of systems be reduced is most desirable. In fact I think it’s necessary.

The Plan W approach that only encourages realignment doesn’t go far enough. But I also wouldn’t like to see realignment dictated at the state level either. I propose a ‘carrot’ approach on a timeline, with a kind of ‘stick’ at the end. Specifically, realignment needs to happen by a certain date, say a 5-year time frame from the time the final plan is adopted. As systems realign they would receive increased funding based on the new system membership. For example, if a 2-county and 3-county system merged, the new system would receive the funding those 5 counties would have received separately, calculated under the new formula (the carrot). Systems that failed to realign would have their funding frozen at the end of the 5-year period (the stick).

Realignment would be the responsibility of the systems involved in the change. I feel confident that with this kind of encouragement current system staff would find a way to overcome the significant difficulties encountered in attempting to realign systems. The map produces by the delivery committee can provide the general framework for realignment, but if individual counties wish to join with other regions than indicated on the delivery map, that should be possible.

**Governance:** A more specific governance structure than the one proposed in Plan W is needed, but Plan Y goes too far. There needs to be some accountability for public money, but a whole new statewide bureaucracy seems to be overkill. I propose taking the current SRLAAW structure and giving it more teeth. System directors would get together regularly to set policy and ensure compliance with the new standards in all areas (CE, consulting, technology, etc.). It’s likely that DPI would need to pursue systems that fail to meet the new standards, as a SRLAAW type group wouldn’t have the authority to take action. It would be hoped that this authority would seldom (never?) be needed, but should be in place.
**Employment:** It’s long been my belief that the best way to reform government is to get staff on board with the reform. The people who work in an organization “know where the bodies are buried” (if that isn’t too strong a metaphor). However those same people will oppose change if they think it means the loss of their job. I would hope that the final PLSR plan will include as a goal that changes be implemented as much as possible without involuntary staff reductions. Staff may have changes in job titles, duties, and location of employment, but loss of income or employment would be avoided. Changes could move forward as vacancies happen due to retirement, resignation, etc.

I know this is probably not possible in all cases, but as a goal it should allay many fears and remove unnecessary opposition to the proposed change. I strongly feel it should be made a part of the final plan.

Thanks for this opportunity to share my thoughts.

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