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Executive Summary

Introduction
The Public Library System Redesign (PLSR) project is a community-based effort. The intention of this project is to enhance the ability of public libraries to access the services they need in order to provide world-class service to the citizens of Wisconsin. Our state already has a proud history: collaborations and partnerships between libraries and 16 public library systems have provided residents with high quality services for over 40 years. However, needs and expectations of libraries and communities have changed over time since the original development of this framework. As with any organization or structure, continuous assessment and evaluation are vital to ensure continued efficient and effective use of the resources available to support Wisconsin's public libraries. This project was informed by hundreds of individuals who served on workgroups, provided feedback, completed questionnaires, answered surveys, made comments, asked questions or participated at summit meetings. The PLSR Steering Committee owes profound thanks to all members of the Wisconsin library community, for this process would not have been possible without their dedication to public service.

General Overview of the Project
The PLSR Steering Committee was appointed by the State Superintendent to oversee implementation of a framework more commonly referred to as the Road Map. The Road Map was originally established and endorsed by the Council on Library and Network Development (COLAND).

The project consisted of three major phases:

2016 Phase 1 - Building Capacity, Building Concepts
- Project Manager proposal reviewed and awarded.
- Workgroups created by the Steering Committee, populated and coordinated by the Project Manager.
- Early workgroup concepts presented at 2016 Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) Conference.
- Updates to COLAND, State Superintendent, system directors and library community.

2 Created by the Wisconsin State Legislature in 1979, the Council on Library and Network Development (COLAND) advises the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (DPI) to ensure that all state citizens have access to library and information services. The 19-member council, appointed by the governor, functions as a forum through which librarians and members of the public identify, study, and collect public testimony on issues affecting Wisconsin libraries and other information services.
Initial workgroup models take shape.

2017 Phase 2 - Intensive Research, Development of Service Models
- Workgroup model development continues; feedback from community and Steering Committee subcommittees.
- Library system presentations to engage community and collect feedback.
- Updates to COLAND, State Superintendent, system directors and library community.

2018 Phase 3 - Consensus Building, Final Recommendations
- Workgroup reports completed, available in April; Core Recommendation Collaborators (CRC) participate.
- Updates to COLAND, State Superintendent, system directors and library community.

Recommendation Process Outcomes

The recommendations developed are:
1. Develop System Standards, Best Practices, and Accountability
2. Enhance Collaboration by Creating Incentives and Removing Barriers
3. Reduce the Number of Regional Library Systems
4. Analyze the Current Funding Formula
5. Initiate Delivery Service Pilot Projects
6. Create an Effective, Well-Managed, State-Scale Discovery Layer
7. Implement a Learning Management System for Professional Development

Additional directives gleaned from the library community include:
1. Service improvements must benefit library patrons.
2. Workgroup reports should be used as frameworks for specific service improvements.
3. Take action now on recommendations with robust support.
4. Service improvements must be soundly-implemented.
5. Potential unintended consequences should be anticipated and studied.

Additional information and resources can be found at the PLSR Project Website.\(^3\)

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Background

At their meeting in August 2012, System and Resource Library Administrators Association of Wisconsin (SRLAAW) conducted a summit and subsequent survey to examine how library systems could continue to most effectively deliver services to their member libraries. This action was largely in response to shrinking governmental budgets and consolidation of public library systems in other states throughout the nation. The subsequent report, Creating Effective Systems, recommended a need to conduct further studies on library system services, size, and strategies for implementing optimally configured systems and establishing service and administrative standards for public library systems.4

During the development of the 2014-2015 biennial budget, the Joint Finance Committee recommended the Department of Administration analyze library systems in order to “conduct a study to identify potential savings in public library systems through consolidation, technology, efficiencies, LEAN practices and service sharing” in consultation with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The Governor deemed this recommendation unnecessary, vetoed it, and acknowledged DPI as the appropriate agency to conduct such a study without the need for legislative directive.5

In response, DPI’s Division for Libraries and Technology initiated a Lean System Study Work Group to examine demand for services by member libraries, and the resources and capacity of public library systems to provide these services. This work group identified areas of service provided by library systems that could be made more efficient. The major recommendation was that study continue and experts from each topical area be tapped to develop further recommendations and implementation strategies.6

While the Lean System Study Work Group finalized their report, the Council on Library and Network Development (COLAND) appointed a workgroup in July 2014 to develop a strategic vision for library systems in the 21st century. In January 2015, COLAND approved their workgroup report, and the following recommendations were presented to State Superintendent Tony Evers:

- Library Consulting - Leverage distributed expertise to provide specialized consulting, verified by DPI;
- Provide and Support Technology Access through aggregation of software and services including shared platforms and expertise;

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PLSR Steering Committee Report Draft – FINAL Edit Version for 12/14
Steering Committee Meeting – Updated 12-10-18

- One State, One Collection - achieved through a statewide discovery layer and underlying library automation software;
- Resource libraries must redefine their value proposition for the twenty-first century;
- Delivery Service - Transition to multi-hub delivery network;
- Coordinate Electronic Resources - Maximize purchasing power;
- Continuing Education - Maximize impact of continuing education funding;
- Eliminate statutory language requiring Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to request 13% for library system aid.  

COLAND included a road map and timeline for further study on how public library systems could most efficiently and effectively deliver services in the topic areas identified by the Lean System Study Work group. The intent was to lead change at the local and regional level to maximize organizational resources and state funding in order to deliver the highest quality library services to Wisconsin residents for the tax dollars provided.  

Recommendation Development Process

In September 2015, the State Superintendent appointed an 11-member steering committee to oversee a multi-year project to re-envision how Wisconsin public library systems serve Wisconsin’s 381 public libraries. Membership was selected based upon library and system size as well as consideration for geographic distribution.

Members of the Steering Committee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Type of Library</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent A. Barnard</td>
<td>Patterson Memorial Library, Wild Rose</td>
<td>Very Small Public</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon Mark Bolthouse</td>
<td>Fond du Lac Public Library</td>
<td>Large Public, non-resource</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth A. Carpenter</td>
<td>Kimberly-Little Chute Public Library^9</td>
<td>Mid-sized Public</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridget C. Christenson</td>
<td>Hatch Public Library, Mauston</td>
<td>Small Public</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 COLAND/LEAN Future of System Services Roadmap, 1 Jan. 2015.
9 After appointment, Carpenter accepted a position with the Appleton Public Library.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Category &amp; Resource</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John DeBacher</td>
<td>Department of Public Instruction</td>
<td>State Library Agency</td>
<td>DPI Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristie L. Hauer</td>
<td>Shawano City-County Library</td>
<td>County Joint Public &amp; Rural</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Kiely</td>
<td>Milwaukee Public Library</td>
<td>Large Public &amp; System Resource</td>
<td>Vice-Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessamyn C. Lee-Jones</td>
<td>Platteville Public Library</td>
<td>Small to Mid-Public (Small Resource)</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan J. McCormick</td>
<td>Hedberg Public Library, Janesville</td>
<td>Public (&amp; Resource; &amp; COLAND)</td>
<td>COLAND Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen R. Ohs</td>
<td>Lakeshores Library System</td>
<td>Small System</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John T. Thompson</td>
<td>IFLS Library System</td>
<td>Large System; LEAN team</td>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The State Superintendent charged the Steering Committee with providing strategic vision, oversight and general leadership in the development of recommendations to update and refine the roles and services of public library systems and maximize public investment in library systems and public libraries.\textsuperscript{10}

The Steering Committee, as well as all workgroups, were made up of volunteers who had other full-time jobs. Recognizing this fact, the Steering Committee issued a nationwide Request for Proposal for a project manager to plan, organize and implement a process focused on eliciting recommendations from the library community. The project manager was also charged with facilitating meetings and structuring the idea generation of the workgroups. Two responses were received. The Steering Committee selected WiLS as the project manager during a meeting held November 4, 2015 at the Wisconsin Library Association’s Annual Conference. The following core principles were adopted by the Steering Committee in December 2015:

- Communication is critical for the success of the process;
- The process relies on openness and trust from all participants;
- Information and data should be the bedrock of the process;
- Outside expertise will add credibility and weight to the outcomes;
- The process will be used to grow skills needed to maintain flexible and community-driven service into the future. \textsuperscript{11}

The project manager led the Steering Committee through a process to form topical workgroups in March 2016. Members of the workgroups were selected from a pool of voluntary applicants. These members were assigned to workgroups based on their subject matter expertise or their status as a user or customer of a service area. The following seven workgroups were formed:

- Chapter 43
- Collections
- Continuing Education/Consulting
- Delivery
- ILL/ILS/Discovery
- Resource Libraries
- Technology

These workgroups were instructed to research their service area extensively and meet regularly to develop recommendations to the steering committee for inclusion in their final report.\textsuperscript{12} Workgroups were also instructed to identify, illustrate and contextualize existing inequities in library service throughout the state and focus on maximizing equity of access for the citizens of

\textsuperscript{10} Appointment letter from Dr. Tony Evers, State Superintendent, Aug. 2015
\textsuperscript{11} Public Library System Redesign Project (PLSR) Principles and Goals, 10 Dec. 2015.
\textsuperscript{12} Information and Call for Workgroup Volunteers, 27 Jan. 2016.
Wisconsin, not the libraries or library systems.\textsuperscript{13} As workgroups developed recommendations, feedback was solicited from the library community in a number of ways, including: an external group of participants asked to review findings through surveys\textsuperscript{14}; presentations made at the 2016 and 2017 Wisconsin Library Association’s annual conference; monthly calls scheduled with directors of public library systems; and virtual question and answer periods open to the public.\textsuperscript{15} The Steering Committee also identified communication liaisons in each system to help disseminate information to member libraries and library boards. Final reports from each workgroup were delivered to the Steering Committee on April 2, 2018.\textsuperscript{16}

After the completion of the workgroup phase, WiLS transitioned from an active project manager role to an administrative and logistics coordinator role. The Steering Committee awarded a bid from Russell Consulting to perform the project manager role of facilitating meetings and the decision-making process.

The Steering Committee reviewed workgroup recommendations individually, as well as at two in-person retreats in February and April of 2018. During these retreats, two groups of collaborators outside of the committee were identified to help craft a final report.

Ten library professionals were selected from a pool of applicants to be Core Recommendation Collaborators (CRC). The Steering Committee selected the members of the CRC based on geographic area and type of library to attempt to instill diverse thought into the process.\textsuperscript{17} The CRC worked with the Steering Committee on developing and testing overarching models of governance that could accommodate the workgroup report recommendations. This work was facilitated by Russell Consulting and took place during two all day meetings.

The findings of this work were shared with the library community and officially made available for public comment from June 11 to July 20.\textsuperscript{18} All public comments were compiled by WiLS and made available to Steering Committee and CRC members.\textsuperscript{19}

A Model Recommendation Summit was held July 30-31 with a number of additional participants joining the Steering Committee and CRC members to further test and discuss the model of governance. At the conclusion of the Summit, several areas of consensus were identified.\textsuperscript{20}

The Steering Committee reconvened (in person) on August 16, to discuss the outcomes of the Summit and to begin to form concrete recommendations. Steering committee members were individually tasked with drafting recommendations for review by the larger committee. A small writing subcommittee worked to refine initial drafts and share progress with the Steering Committee. The writing subcommittee held weekly phone calls to organize work and coordinate with Steering Leadership on the timing of upcoming Steering Committee meetings.

\textsuperscript{14} PLSR Survey Panel Volunteer Form.
\textsuperscript{15} Workgroup presentations, recordings, and materials as well as recorded calls with system directors were shared on the PLSR website.
\textsuperscript{16} PLSR Workgroup Recommendations Report, 4 April 2018.
\textsuperscript{17} Core Recommendation Collaborators Announcement, 5 Mar 2018.
\textsuperscript{18} Preliminary models, a comparison tool, and introduction to the comparison tool can be found on the Steering Recommendation Development Phase page of the PLSR website, in the Preliminary Model Framework section.
\textsuperscript{19} PLSR Model Development Comments, 23 Jul. 2018.
\textsuperscript{20} Model Development Summit Notes, 30-31 Jul. 2018.
Including the meeting on August 16, the Steering Committee met five times (virtually and in-person) to discuss and develop their final recommendations. A draft version of the final report was prepared prior to and at the end of each meeting and shared with the library community for comment. All comments received were distributed to the whole of the Steering Committee for consideration.

Directives Gleaned from the Library Community through the Recommendation Development Process

Wisconsin public libraries and systems have a strong history of working together to provide excellent services. Accordingly, the process of developing the recommendations contained in this report was robust. A wide range of stakeholder groups were consulted for feedback. Library directors, library staff, system directors, system staff, library and system board trustees, county officials, as well as past and present DPI officials were all involved in the process. Large amounts of project documentation were made available to these stakeholder groups, and feedback was received from individuals and boards at the library, system and county levels. There were multiple open comment periods geared toward multiple audiences. The recommendation development process culminated in a summit-style meeting, followed by a final public comment period on the content derived from that summit. The feedback received by the Steering Committee was extremely valuable. An effort was therefore made to distill key directives expressed by the community at-large.

Service improvements must benefit library patrons.

One of the Principles of PLSR Structure is to “ensure all Wisconsin public libraries have the capacity to provide equitable access to excellent library services regardless of the race, ethnicity, income, gender, or employment status of the people they serve, or their location within the state”. Any service improvements moving forward must fulfill this principle and ultimately benefit the end-user, the library patron.

Workgroup reports should be used as frameworks for specific service improvements.

Service workgroups consisted of experts from across the state. The studies they completed of current service areas were thoughtful and in-depth. Inequities were examined, which led to recommendations for improving service. Upon review by the library community, several workgroup recommendations garnered early support for service improvements in specific areas: delivery, discovery layer, technology, and the creation of a CE portal. The workgroup reports provide a solid foundation for moving forward in these areas.

Take action now on recommendations with robust support.

The specific areas mentioned above represent areas of greatest need for libraries; areas that would provide immediate, positive service outcomes to Wisconsin residents. With the workgroup reports serving as frameworks for improvements, action must be taken quickly and purposefully. Some of the workgroup recommendations require more significant changes in order to affect service improvement. For example, state-scale implementation of a service such as technology would require changes to governance structures, funding, administration, and would require widespread support from the library community. It became clear throughout the recommendation development process that organic, non-mandated change should lead improvements forward.

Service improvements must be soundly-implemented.

Implementation of service improvements must be driven by effective research, planning, execution and change-management. Implementation should also be supported by adequate resources. The library community expressed concerns about how administration, funding and governance might change with proposed service improvements. Any service improvement moving forward must have a well-developed plan for how it will be managed, who will govern the service, how it will be implemented, how local relationships will be maintained or developed, as well as evidence of how efficiencies will be gained.

Potential unintended consequences should be anticipated and studied.

Each of the recommendations contained in this report include suggestions for implementation. However, it was made extremely clear by the library community that any efforts to implement recommendations should be preceded by assessments to identify risk factors that could lead to unintended negative outcomes.
Recommendation 1: Develop System Standards, Best Practices and Accountability

Recommendation

Develop and implement an appropriate set of standards, best practices and accountability measures designed to support equity of access to high quality services by public libraries in all parts of Wisconsin. Identify standards requiring accountability measures. Structure any such measures in a manner that holds member libraries harmless.

Summary

Since their establishment in the 1970s, library systems and the services they provide have evolved independently of each other as a response to local need, availability of resources and local board decisions. Therefore, services provided to member libraries vary greatly from system to system in availability, funding and scope. Member libraries are sometimes unaware of the services required by statute and often systems use their best judgement in delivering services that may or may not be viewed as standard system services in other parts of the state. Regional customization of services is a benefit from Wisconsin’s unique library structure. This recommendation is not intended to restrict such localized service provision. Rather, a baseline of essential services should be established upon which systems can build. In 2013, SRLAAW created a set of voluntary standards to help, but statewide agreement on essential services and the levels of which to provide those services remains elusive.

Library systems are currently required to provide a range of services detailed in Wisconsin State Statute 43.24 to qualify and maintain eligibility to receive state aid. These standards include agreements with member libraries, provision of backup reference services to member libraries, and the provision of training to member libraries, among other requirements. Wisconsin statutes currently allow DPI to reduce aid to systems if they do not comply with existing standards.

Statutes are difficult to adjust. Technology, often a key driver of system services, changes rapidly. For these reasons, it is suggested that the Administrative Code be explored as much as possible as a primary means of establishing any updated regulatory structures. Utilizing the Administrative Code will provide flexibility in the present, while allowing future flexibility as well.

The PLSR project has shown a number of areas in which best practices relating to the operation of library systems exist. Specific examples ripe for positive impact include common accounting procedures, collaborative tracking of consulting services, board trustee development and bringing

22 Wisconsin State Statue 43.24, [https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/43/24](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/43/24) (last accessed 6 Dec. 2018).
greater commonalities to the collection of data. This untapped resource of best practices discovered by this project may not be addressed through formal standards or regulation, but should be captured, refined, shared and in some cases incentivized for widespread use.

Creation of a formal mechanism to define best practices and standardization of data collection would provide immediate benefits to Wisconsin library systems and their members. It may also provide Wisconsin library systems with a more effective means to compare services and to identify further opportunities to collaborate.

Great care must be taken should efforts be made to construct accountability measures for library systems. As previously indicated, DPI may reduce state aid to library systems not meeting the current standards. While a reduction in aid would impact the library system, it would also certainly impact member libraries by diminishing the services they have access to through the system. Reduction in aid could place additional complications on a system to meet any standards, current or future. It is therefore recommended by the Steering Committee that any accountability measures be designed to minimize negative impacts on member libraries.

Goals of the Recommendation

- Construct and implement a process to analyze services currently offered by systems, gather feedback and determine which services should be codified in standards. Standards could include a “tiered” structure, and/or be based upon recently developed standards for public libraries in some fashion.

- Create effective mechanisms to identify best practices, for the library community to refine them, and for library systems to begin using them.

- Create an effective partnership between library community stakeholder groups (DPI, System Directors, Library Development and Legislation Committee of WLA, COLAND) with the common goal of forging a legislative and/or procedural path toward achieving the recommendation.

- Inform initiatives related to other recommendations in this report concerning statewide policies that ensure equity.

- Accomplish a successful update of the Administrative Code in a manner that achieves the recommendation while minimizing risk.

Value Proposition

- Creation of standards will establish a baseline to ensure every library in the state has high-quality, consistent expectations of service from their system. Better standards will guarantee library systems have a clear understanding of not only the types of services they should provide using state funding, but also the level at which they provide those services.
A substantial amount of time was spent during the PLSR process in gathering disparate data from systems to analyze system services and make recommendations for improvements. Sharing best practices and standard reporting practices between systems will better allow for measuring the success of PLSR recommendations as well as making further analysis and improvements possible. Best practices can reduce the time required for mandatory reporting for all systems, especially as it relates to financial data. Libraries will also be able to compare system services easily, allowing libraries to identify and correct inequities of service delivery that may arise in the future.

Suggested Implementation Process

- Obtain an in-depth review of current system standards and accountability measures, preferably by an outside entity. Additional initial comments may be sought from DPI and LD&L.

- Appoint a task force of system directors, system staff, and public library directors (representing each certification “grade”) charged with identifying, developing and recommending specific system standards.

- Undertake a process of engagement with DPI and other legislative knowledge leaders in order to create a firm understanding of the extent to which the Administrative Code may be used to achieve the goals contained in this recommendation.

- Present recommended standards to the library community for comment. Include an additional opportunity for feedback from LD&L in this process.

- Present recommended standards concurrently to DPI and LD&L for possible legislative or administrative action.

- Convene a gathering of system directors, DPI personnel and others. Utilize this gathering to create a list of immediately-evident useful best practices. Create a plan for capturing, refining and publishing future best practices.

- Create methods by which to learn and formalize future best practices through existing collaborations. For example: existing meetings of the System Office Managers and Bookkeepers Association of Wisconsin (SOMBAW) could be used to formalize accounting standards and meetings of library system Continuing Education Coordinators could identify standards for consultant tracking.

Measuring Success

- Establishment of a process by which best practices can be captured, refined and promulgated will be an immediate improvement. A formal process will allow best practices to be retained, curated and made tangible.

- In implementing certain best practices, it is possible that systems may realize financial value, which can then be quantified and analyzed.

- Standards are drafted and endorsed by stakeholder groups (SRLAAW, COLAND, member libraries, etc.) to be delivered to LD&L as a package to implement change.
The degree to which libraries are able to assess how the services offered by their home system compare to the services offered by other systems may be compared at varying stages of any initiative geared toward improving library system standards.
Recommendation 2: Enhance Collaboration by Creating Incentives and Removing Barriers

Recommendation

Accelerate the shifting paradigm of service collaboration among Wisconsin’s public library systems by establishing incentives and removing barriers. Apply this approach to support voluntary consolidations of library systems. When prudent, seek discrete changes in state statutes or administrative code that would help systems achieve and sustain momentum in this area.

Summary

Through the PLSR project, the library community has achieved an unprecedented level of self-awareness about opportunities to collaborate. Specific examples of new collaboration between public library systems include service consolidations, sharing of staff positions and group purchasing. These positive outcomes should be celebrated. This recommendation is an outgrowth of multiple PLSR workgroup reports, as well as other previous studies. Feedback gathered from the library community throughout the project includes strong support for collaboration that is based upon willing partnerships.

In addition to cooperative ventures centered around specific services, the topic of system consolidation was of significant discussion during each phase of the PLSR process. System consolidation typically refers to the act of two or more regional library systems uniting into a new entity on equal terms, however, statutory provisions also exist for a library or county to withdraw from one system in order to join another. In recent years, a number of counties or systems in Wisconsin have attempted to merge with or join another system. These collective experiences provide a unique opportunity to study the factors (obstacles, successes, funding, etc.) behind each outcome and apply the results.

There is a strong degree of consensus among the library community that mergers or consolidations of library systems have the best service outcomes when they are voluntary. By contrast, mandatory consolidations strongly increase the likelihood of dysfunctional outcomes that can take many years to overcome. There is strong logic behind the conjecture that incentives would be helpful, but detailed analysis is still needed in order to determine the specific form(s) incentives should take. Attempts at merging systems can be challenging due to many issues, including local control, trust, fiscal issues and transition processes that are in any way unclear. The Department of Public Instruction is uniquely suited to play a leadership role in developing tools and new structures of support to increase chances of success. Organizations such as the System and Resource Library Administrator’s Association (SRLAAW) and the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) are also key allies.

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23 Examples include the creation of Bridges Library System, libraries from Jefferson County joining libraries from Waukesha County, as well as the creation of the Monarch Library System through the merger of Eastern Shores Library System and the Mid-Wisconsin Library System.
Goals of the Recommendation

- Capture the knowledge of individuals experienced in system merger discussions or processes. Utilize this knowledge to create an analysis of significant factors that play a role in the system consolidation process: specifically, how they may be addressed effectively. Involve the previously identified individuals directly in the process of identifying and implementing specific incentives, disincentives or barriers in need of removal.

- Identify and prioritize specific incentives, disincentives and barriers that could be implemented or removed in order to further stimulate collaboration between library systems.

- Publish a process document to assist library systems in effectively planning for any future consolidation. At minimum, the document must include a checklist of steps and a detailed example timeline. It must also be current in regard to state statutes, the administrative code and DPI interpretations. The document should include specific recommendations for organizing and completing a system merger.

- Identify and recommend specific legislative changes to DPI and/or WLA that would streamline the process of voluntary system mergers.

- Cultivate and connect the expertise, leadership and capacities that currently exist in libraries throughout the state.

- Leverage the experience, knowledge and talents of those that directly serve patrons in developing and providing innovative services to communities of all sizes.

Value Proposition

- Library systems provide a broad range of critical services to their member libraries. Many of these services are delivered at economies of scale that could never be achieved by individual libraries alone, and this model continues to evolve. A number of collaborative ventures — not possible just a few short years ago — have now been put into practice successfully among the regional systems. For example, systems are now beginning to share bookkeeping services, hosting server and network equipment on shared infrastructure and collaborating to provide professional development opportunities to a much broader audience than ever before.

- Based upon the rapid pace of technology, it is possible even greater economies of scale may be realized through collaboration by and between systems. In many cases, more favorable distributions of costs and administrative overhead mean that library systems and libraries can provide better services and/or more comprehensive collections to the people they serve.

- A focus on identifying, incentivizing and supporting opportunities for voluntary change will help ensure future success. Stakeholders are able to engage having a mutual interest in positive outcomes. This approach can help fuel any number of processes, from merging two systems, to trying out a new service collaboration, to taking part in a delivery pilot, or becoming a partner in some other project with positive impacts on services to the citizens.
of Wisconsin. Such changes, when appropriately supported, can be empowering to those directly involved, and inspiring to others.

- Additional value generated by this recommendation may include:
  - New trust relationships;
  - General momentum toward;
  - A blueprint for positive change;
  - Improved access equity through better economies of scale.

Suggested Implementation Process

- Appoint a project manager or implementation team tasked with accomplishing the goals set in this recommendation.
- Craft an appropriate timeline for completion of necessary research and other necessary work.
- Conduct a needs assessment to determine the resources necessary to complete the goals set in this recommendation.
- Identify key individuals with involvement in system mergers or other significant collaborations between library systems. Devise a process to interview them and build a knowledge base. Construct a “gold standard”.
- Engage with library community experts, DPI and other relevant professionals to create an assessment of potential incentives, disincentives or barriers that might be enacted or removed.
- Advise DPI in utilizing research findings to create the process document outlined in the recommendation goals.
- Either advise DPI in drafting specific legislative changes that may be sought or draft recommendations for legislative changes and refer to the Library Development and Legislation committee (LD&L) of the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA).

Measuring Success

- One tangible measure by which the success of this recommendation may be assessed is the extent to which tools and mechanisms are created to aid systems, including:
  - A process document developed to guide the process of planning for and completing a system merger;
  - Non-financial incentives (change management consulting services, other forms of in-kind support made available through DPI or other agencies, etc.);
○ Financial incentives (including LSTA grant categories or other grant awards).

● Further quantitative and qualitative measures, including process surveys, satisfaction surveys, data analytics, interviews, etc. may also be used.

● An essential measure of success will be the degree to which any systems undertake the process and achieve success: meaning at least one successful merger or significant regionalization of a service.
Recommendation 3: Reduce the Number of Regional Systems

Recommendation
Reduce the current number of regional public library systems.

Summary
Sixteen regional public library systems provide services to public libraries in Wisconsin. These services, delivered at-scale, are critical to member libraries. The original statutory framework allowing formation of library systems was set in place in 1971. Since that time, each system has evolved differently to meet local needs. Counties are the basic geographic building blocks for systems, thus systems range in size from ten counties to single counties. Due to advancements in technology and the evolving needs of libraries, an element of the library community now holds the belief that a strategic reduction in the number of regional systems (through consolidation) would help address service capacity issues. Indeed, this proposition is echoed in a number of key reports by stakeholder groups, which suggest potential service improvements may result from a fewer number of systems. These reports include:

- “Creating More Effective Public Library Systems” (2013/SRLAAW);
- “Lean System Study Work Group Recommendations” (2014/DPI);

In addition to the above reports, the concept of a strategic reduction in the number of library systems was a key recommendation sent to the PLSR Steering Committee with support from the participants in the PLSR Model Development Summit.

Goals of the Recommendation

- Conduct and complete a process to identify which regional public library systems have the greatest possibilities of voluntarily consolidating.
- Utilize other content in this report to inform creation of a system of incentives that would encourage or assist library systems down the path of consolidation.
- Remove barriers to consolidation (also see Recommendation 2).
- Utilize other content in this report to inform creation of a structure of support, including detailed resources for the libraries, systems and counties choosing to undertake any degree of service consolidation.
- Improve equity of access to high-quality services.
Value Proposition

- There is strong potential that, in some areas of the state, a strategic reduction in the number of systems will result in higher quality and more comprehensive services than most smaller library systems are typically able to provide on their own.

- Voluntary consolidation processes have the strongest potential to preserve the structures of trust and relationships that are prerequisite for the effective delivery of services to member libraries within the current ecosystem of library services in Wisconsin.

Suggested Implementation Process

- Identify a person, party or constituency of the library community charged with working with library systems encountering a director vacancy. Create a process that can be deployed in order to bring the option of consolidation with a neighboring system to the fore. Consider establishing additional requirements which systems must meet before a director vacancy may be filled.

- Provide adequate resources and full support by DPI for implementation of recommendation #2 “Enhance Collaboration by Creating Incentives and Removing Barriers”.

- Support precursors to mergers, such as: partnerships related to library management software, shared positions, shared procurement or other service consolidations.

Measuring Success

- Achievement of at least one effective system consolidation would be an essential indicator of success.

- By utilizing in-depth service inventories, member libraries, system boards and member counties may analyze the potential for service improvements before any actual system consolidation begins. Pairing and analyzing the results of a pre-consolidation inventory with those of a “post-consolidation” inventory will allow authoritative results.

- A similar method could be devised in order to compare service response times pre- and post-consolidation (examples: resolution of IT help desk tickets, library consulting call-back times, etc.).

- A comparison of the net funding available (in the form of system services) to member libraries pre- and post-consolidation may also be utilized in an analysis.

- Through a process of identifying duplicated efforts, savings (or expansions in service) may be found (potential examples: converging network circuits, merging subscriptions to accounting or HR software, vendor contract scaling and leveraging certain county assets).
Recommendation 4: Analyze the Current Funding Formula

Recommendation

Conduct a thorough analysis of the current funding formula for library systems\textsuperscript{24}, including practices utilized to apportion state aid. Identify and propose alternative funding formulas, methods of apportionment or other solutions with potential to improve equity of access to high-quality library services.

Summary

Each biennium, the Wisconsin legislature approves an amount of state aid intended to fund the operation of library systems. This appropriation is further apportioned to the library systems by the Department of Public Instruction. In general, this process is conducted according to a combination of statutory imperatives and administrative procedures. The formula as originally written combined aspects of population, geographic area and municipal and county expenditures to determine the amount each regional system receives on an annual basis. In the late nineties, legislative events occurred which in effect “froze” the data sets used to calculate funding levels of that time. Therefore, for at least twenty years, apportionment of state aid to library systems has not been based upon up-to-date population demographics or municipal expenditures. This apportionment is at odds with the intent of the original formula design as well as the 1999 attempt to replace local expenditures with shared revenue.

Throughout the PLSR process, the funding mechanism for library systems has been a persistent discourse throughout the library community. At least one alternative funding formula was proposed\textsuperscript{25}, as well as a number of discrete factors that should be explored (such as poverty, unemployment and infant mortality rates). It is the belief of the Steering Committee that a vigorous investigation of possible alternatives to current practice should occur.

Goals of the Recommendation

- Leverage the collective knowledge of the library community.

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\textsuperscript{24} The Department of Public Instruction provides a clear explanation of the formula and changes since its inception at \url{https://wilibrariesforeveryone.blogspot.com/2015/05/calculating-state-aid-to-systems.html} (last accessed 6 Dec. 2018).

\textsuperscript{25} Public Library Service Model W was released for public comment after the conclusion of the second CRC meeting, 8 Jun. 2018.
• Identify discrete changes to statutes or administrative procedures that would, at minimal risk, enhance or improve the funding model underpinning library system services.

• Coordinate the efforts of stakeholder groups in order to create and implement an action plan for any necessary administrative or legislative action.

• Achieve meaningful changes that improve equity of access to high-quality library services across Wisconsin, while ensuring that no system experiences a decrease in base funding. (PLSR Steering Committee Principles of Structure).

Value Proposition

• System funding has a direct impact on local libraries’ ability to provide quality services to patrons. To ensure every Wisconsin resident benefits from library services, funding should adequately support the system services that libraries need.

• By conducting a thorough and objective analysis of the current State funding formula, alternative formula options and any potentially unintended consequences, a solid foundation will be achieved for further decision-making and consensus building.

Suggested Implementation Process

• It is recommended that the Department of Public Instruction appoint an implementation team made up of 3-7 topical experts with minimal potential for conflicts of interest to complete the recommendation.26

• Conduct an in-depth analysis of the current funding formula and practices utilized to apportion state aids for regional library systems as described in the recommendation.

• Seek vigorous input on the results of the analysis from key constituent entities, including system directors, DPI leadership, WLA Board, the WLA LD&L committee, etc.

• Identify from the analysis any specific improvements that could be made and construct a series of administrative or legislative objectives for action.

• Implement governmental/administrative procedures or effective legislative outreach to achieve desired changes.

Measuring Success

• The extent to which DPI and library community stakeholder groups can effectively partner will be a core factor affecting success of implementation.

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● The level to which service equity may be improved while also holding all systems financially harmless will be a critical success factor.

● General rigor of any devised process, including how feedback is used to improve it, will also be a key factor by which to judge success.
Recommendation 5: Initiate Delivery Service Pilot Projects

Recommendation
Stimulate development within the resource-sharing environment by initiating one or more pilot projects relating to library delivery services.

Summary
Physical resource-sharing generates tremendous value for libraries and, therefore, taxpayers. Sixteen independent regional delivery networks currently provide physical delivery of library materials between Wisconsin libraries. These regional networks are each operated and administered by regional public library systems. Each regional network's hub is, in turn, linked to the delivery service of the South Central Library System (headquartered in the metropolitan area of Madison, WI). The result is a resource-sharing architecture whereby a library patron in Superior can request an item from a library branch in Kenosha and receive it in a number of days.

In their report, the PLSR Delivery Workgroup produced a number of recommendations geared toward providing more equitable delivery services to all areas of the State. The end-model originally described by the workgroup features eight larger delivery regions — each with a single “hub” location — that are all interlinked. This delivery network was envisioned by the workgroup to be funded and coordinated in a manner akin to a single statewide delivery service. It is important to note that, although the funding and coordination components of the model would differ from current practice, the intention of the workgroup in creating their delivery model was that libraries would not experience any significant change in the quality of service. Rather, the model proposed in the Delivery Workgroup Report is intended to increase the frequency of service for any libraries who desire it.

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Goals of the Recommendation

- Utilize the Delivery Workgroup Report as a flexible foundation from which to:
  - Incentivize collaborative consolidation of regional delivery services in certain regions of the state;
  - Work towards the reduction in the number separate delivery regions in the state from 16 to 8 (as recommended by the workgroup) while utilizing existing delivery assets, locations, and/or shared contracting;
  - Determine, through the pilot approach, whether the efficiencies identified as outcomes of a restructured regional delivery hub connection network improve delivery between Wisconsin libraries.
- Increase equity of access to rapid, efficient delivery services in areas of the state under stress related to funding levels.
- Decrease wait times for library patrons by lowering the percentage of requested items that must travel long distances and/or through a centralized sorting house.
- Improve overall redundancy of the statewide delivery system, thus increasing resiliency in the face of inclement weather or staffing issues.
- Reduce duplicated efforts in some areas of the state through converged delivery service infrastructure and administration.

Value Proposition

- Through the pilot project approach, many of the concepts addressed in the Delivery Workgroup Report may be tested in an incremental fashion without putting the entire statewide infrastructure under stress.
- A blueprint will exist for future projects should the pilot project approach be successful.
- Potential efficiencies, should any regional consolidations occur, may include:
  - Shorter transit times - patrons getting materials faster;
  - Fewer miles travelled - fuel cost savings;
  - Reduction of duplicated administrative overhead - economies of scale.

Suggested Implementation Process

- Hire a project manager and/or create a small task-force charged with performing necessary research, coordinating stakeholder groups and managing implementation issues relating to this recommendation.
Identify specific areas of the state where opportunities exist for delivery-related pilot projects.

Work with systems in these areas to identify opportunities to coordinate delivery services, up to and including establishment of multi-system hubs. Include creation of a link to South Central Library System in this process.

Utilize feedback from the coordination process in order to construct useful incentives (example: LSTA grants to help with start-up costs).

Create a source of ongoing implementation support to the systems participating in a pilot project.

Create a guaranteed source of contingency support to systems participating in a pilot project.

Conduct additional planning for any future transition to regional hub links, as described in the Delivery Workgroup Report.

Create a process to achieve further coordination between regional library systems, with the goal of utilizing the Delivery Workgroup recommendations as a guide. One intermediary step of this process may be a “North/South” hub arrangement, as detailed in the Delivery Workgroup Report.

Measuring Success

One major goal of this recommendation is to determine whether the model described in the Delivery Workgroup Report (or something resembling that model) is good for Wisconsin libraries and their patrons. Therefore, a key measure of success will be the extent to which such a determination can be made. In order to avoid subjectivity, appropriate data points should be identified and compared prior to, during and after implementation of a pilot project in this service area. A detailed service inventory could be developed, including average transit times, cost-per-stop, comparisons to other areas in the state and other key metrics. This service inventory could be completed prior to, during and after a pilot project to assess effectiveness.

As any pilot projects unfold, an ongoing analysis should be conducted to prove or disprove the calculations by the Delivery Workgroup. Specifically, would their recommendation to transition to a model that connects regional delivery hubs more directly to each other gain the efficiencies and potential cost savings as reported by the workgroup? The following data benchmarks gathered by the workgroup and Funding Subcommittee could form a basis for this analysis:

- In 2017, approximately 18.7 million items were shipped from one library to another within the 16-library system’s regional delivery services for a total cost of nearly $3,000,000.

- In the same year, a little more than 600,000 items were shipped from one system to another or between non-public library participants through the current statewide delivery service for a cost of nearly $1,300,000.
○ The result equates to 70% of total funding for library delivery in Wisconsin supporting the delivery of 97% of the total materials shipped, with the remaining 30% of the funding supporting just 3% of library materials shipped.
Recommendation 6: Create an Effective, Well-Managed, State-Scale Discovery Layer

Recommendation

Engage with topical experts, public library systems and the library community at-large to create an effective, well-managed, state-scale library discovery layer.

Summary

A “discovery layer” refers to the visual interface used by library patrons to find, identify, select and obtain the various types of resources offered by the 21st century public library. These resources include physical books and audiovisual materials, as well as an ever-broadening variety of downloadable and streamable digital resources such as audiobooks, feature films, news and/or scholarly articles and other digital content.

The PLSR process has resulted in an unprecedented degree of understanding of the commonalities and differences between library management software products. Likewise, it has also produced greater awareness of how library patrons seek resources, how discovery services are provided by the current regional library systems, and how those services are funded and managed.

Throughout the PLSR process, the concept of a state-scale discovery layer option has maintained a robust degree of support from project participants, the library community, and other stakeholder groups. Additionally, DPI already maintains a resource sharing platform called WISCAT. There is, therefore, a strong foundation for achievement of this recommendation.

Goals of the Recommendation

● Achieve interoperability between the various library management software platforms used in Wisconsin. (COLAND Strategic Direction #2)

● Provide a best-in-class search interface option that allows patrons seamless access to library collections (both physical and digital) across the state regardless of where they live. (COLAND Strategic Direction #3)

● Reduce procurement, budgeting, training and technical administration efforts that are duplicated by the current sixteen regional systems in maintaining fourteen discrete online discovery platforms.

● Embrace the critical need of libraries (and regional systems) to make decisions and tailor services in response to the needs of library patrons where they are.

● Open an additional collaboration space related to procurement and access of electronic materials. A number of discovery layer software platforms can now flexibly display content licensed at state-scale (for example, BadgerLink resources) alongside content licensed by
smaller groups of libraries. If implemented throughout Wisconsin, it would provide great opportunity for libraries, library systems, and other groups (for example: the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium) to collaborate in unprecedented ways. (COLAND Strategic Direction #4)

Value Proposition

Wisconsin libraries already share resources. However, the set of technologies relied upon to accomplish this sharing are aging, with some foundations dating to 1970s. Successful creation of an effective, well-managed discovery layer at state-scale has the potential to improve services to patrons in the following ways:

- Library patrons may search the collections of any public library in the state, obtaining rich, detailed, vibrant results that are optimized for the shortest delivery time based on geographic location;
- Library systems and/or individual libraries that do not have the resources to purchase or operate top-tier library management software would nonetheless benefit, improving the baseline patron experience;
- Discovery-based interoperability between existing library management software would open up a significant collaboration space - removing a barrier to new partnerships and allowing freer communication between libraries.

Suggested Implementation Process

- Hire or appoint a project manager and/or small implementation team vested with the ability to drive the project.
- Conduct a general risk/benefit assessment to identify unanticipated consequences.
- Conduct a governance assessment to determine how decisions impacting the look, feel and function of the state-scale discovery layer will be made.
- Conduct a needs assessment to identify minimum technical requirements necessary to achieve interoperability between different library management software platforms.
- Identify a communication protocol that meets the above determined requirements for interoperability.
- Working with DPI, create technical standards for use in negotiating vendor agreements.

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28 The State of Wisconsin ranks #1 nationwide in library resource-sharing on a consistent basis.[IMLS data?]
30 This step is recommended to occur in some fashion for each additional recommendation in this report.
● If necessary, create an application capable of translating action messages between the library management systems in use in Wisconsin.

● Explore the current capabilities of library software vendor discovery products, including open-source platforms.

● Conduct a fiscal assessment to determine costs when scaled to the entire state.

● Organize a process to evaluate and select a product that will serve as the state-scale discovery layer.

● Create a structure for ongoing evaluation and improvement.

● Strongly consider establishing a group charged with taking a leadership role in fostering collaborations in the area of library management software.

Measuring Success

● It is recommended that a statewide “importance/effectiveness” survey be developed, to be deployed both before and after implementation. This survey should include an in-depth list of currently available and desired features of library discovery software. By deploying the survey before and after, a number of assessments may be made. For example, if a significantly greater number of libraries report a significantly greater degree of access to features they deem as important after implementation of the project, the conclusion may be drawn that the project resulted in better service to a greater number of libraries.

● Patron outcomes and the user experience should be assessed before and after implementation. Available mechanisms for such an assessment include surveys, focus groups and interviews.
Recommendation 7: Implement a Learning Management System for Professional Development

Recommendation

Oversee the design, deployment and operation of a learning management system capable of meeting the current and future needs of librarians in Wisconsin.

Summary

Wisconsin is made stronger by its library professionals. Like many other professions, ongoing development opportunities are needed to maintain a sharp edge. Wisconsin requires that library directors and regional system directors maintain certification through DPI. Regional systems are statutorily obligated to provide professional development opportunities for these individuals, as well as library staff and board trustees. This professional development ensures that libraries are managed efficiently and effectively.

Historically, each regional library system has provided local professional development opportunities to its member libraries and managed the process of certifying local staff. As the availability of new learning technologies has accelerated, many library systems have begun to collaborate, share content and work together. This area is ripe for further positive change. However, the certification process is still entirely paper-based and requires many “touches” by local, regional and state individuals.

The learning management system should meet the current professional development needs of library professionals and library board trustees throughout Wisconsin as well as be flexible enough to evolve as future needs change. This system should serve as a repository of online professional development content (streaming courses, webinars, etc.) while also providing library staff and trustees with the ability to locate nearby in-person professional development activities through incorporation of an interactive event calendar. It is further envisioned that this portal will include the capability for library professionals to manage their own certification status online, while providing DPI the capability to exercise their statutory oversight obligation in a manner that is both efficient and effective.

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31 Watson, W. R. & Watson, S. L. define a Learning Management System as “the infrastructure that delivers and manages instructional content, identifies and assesses individual and organizational learning or training goals, tracks the progress towards meeting those goals, and collects and presents data for supervising the learning process of an organization as a whole.” See: What are Learning Management Systems, what are they not, and what should they become? TechTrends 51(2): 28-34.
Goals of the Recommendation

- Furnish library professionals with a more effective means of discovering and obtaining content and instruction that is directly applicable to their professional development.
- Eliminate the current paper-based process of certification, in favor of a user-friendly online system to streamline the process of applying for certification, submitting and tracking contact hours, validating contact hours and granting of certification (or recertification) status.
- Foster collaboration between agencies that offer professional development opportunities through implementation of a curated calendar of events and opportunities across the entire state.

Value Proposition

- Modernizing the certification process would benefit our state through continued presence of highly qualified leaders in the profession, while leveraging technology to reduce general administrative overhead (COLAND Strategic Direction #5).
- A well-curated learning management platform would significantly reduce valuable time required to locate professional development opportunities. This reduction, in turn, would result in more time spent providing direct service to the public (COLAND Strategic Direction #2).
- Current practice is for each regional library system to provide opportunities for professional development to member libraries. Therefore, quality and frequency vary greatly. Creation of a single online tool geared toward professional development for library staff and library trustees would reduce duplication of effort and spur collaboration while simultaneously improving equity of access to many high-quality professional development opportunities on a statewide basis (COLAND Strategic Direction #5).

Suggested Implementation Process

- Appoint a small implementation team of well-qualified individuals.
- Consider hiring a project manager to drive the project, manage the implementation team and serve as a bridge between stakeholder groups.
- Review any specifications for the platform that have been created to date and create an authoritative list.
- Compare specifications with existing learning management system vendor capabilities.
- Explore potential cost, quality and feasibility of a tool or software developed or licensed “in house” by DPI or another partner.
- Utilize platform specifications document to craft a Request for Information (RFI). Distribute the request to qualified learning management system vendors and/or software development agencies.
Create a process to evaluate software options, including:

- Ability to meet content requirements and goals of this PLSR recommendation;
- User Experience;
- Administration requirements (back-end management);
- Cost.

Measuring Success

- It is recommended that a formal analysis of the certification workflow take place before implementation of any changes and that an identical analysis occur after implementation of any changes.

- Completion of a general survey is also recommended. An effective survey will assess levels of satisfaction among library professionals with respect to access to (and quality of) professional development resources. This survey could also be done before and after for purposes of comparison.

- Analysis by an external party should be incorporated into any assessment activities related to this recommendation. In particular, the levels of collaboration between regional library systems should be compared.
Appendix A: Library Systems in Wisconsin: A Brief History

Wisconsin’s library system law, providing funding for coordinated regional library services, officially went into effect in 1971 when Senate Bill 47 was signed into law. The creation of public library systems fostered the establishment of a strong network of resource sharing and mutually beneficial interdependence. At their inception, library systems were intended to bring library services to unserved rural residents, improve library services to those who found local library resources to be insufficient, and provide structure for interlibrary cooperation while maintaining local control. 32

The creation and development of public library systems in Wisconsin was a voluntary and gradual process. No county or public library is required to be a member of a library system; yet, all of Wisconsin’s 72 counties and over 380 public libraries are library system members. Wisconsin’s public library systems developed in distinct ways in response to the needs of their member libraries and area residents. The systems have continued to evolve as changes in society, resources and technologies create new demands and opportunities.

The seeds for regional library services had been planted years earlier and several regional services had coordinated cooperative services. In 1956, the American Library Association published Public Library Service: A Guide to Evaluation with Minimum Standards, which introduced the library system concept. That same year the United States Congress enacted the Library Services Act (LSA) to provide federal funding for extending and improving public library service to rural communities. Wisconsin’s Free Library Commission worked with the Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) to submit a plan for Wisconsin’s LSA funds. Also, in 1956, twenty-five public libraries joined together to form the Southwest Association of Public Libraries. In 1959 they obtained LSA funding to establish an ordering and processing center serving five counties, the predecessor to the Southwest Wisconsin Library System. A precursor of the Northern Waters Library System was established in northwest Wisconsin serving five counties in the same year.

In 1963, the Free Library Commission, WLA and the Wisconsin Library Trustees Association adopted A Design for Public Library Development in Wisconsin: Standards for Measuring Progress. The following statement summarizes the vision:

"Simply stated, the library system concept means that only by working together, sharing services and materials, can libraries meet the full needs of their users. Each public library, whatever its size, is an important link in a system of libraries joined together either formally or informally."

32 WLA Public Library Systems brochure
That document described a shared vision of public library systems that ultimately led to the development and adoption of 1971 Senate Bill 47 through a series of events:

- In 1965, the Wisconsin Library Commission was folded into DPI and became the Division for Library Services;
- In 1966, WLA approved a legislative study program calling for legislation to "implement the library system concept and interlibrary cooperation in Wisconsin;"
- In 1968, the Library Development and Legislative Committee (LD&L) of WLA developed a report for the legislature;
- In 1969, that report was introduced as Senate Bill 363;
- The Senate Education Committee recommended the bill be revised; and
- In 1971, Senate Bill 47 was introduced and, after extensive legislative efforts by WLA, was passed by both houses. The bill included the following declaration:

"Recognizing the importance of making quality library resources and services readily available to all of the citizens of Wisconsin, the legislature, through this act, seeks to modernize library laws for public and school libraries, to promote development and improvement of public libraries through library systems and to provide maximum opportunities for cooperation among all types of libraries in order to encourage the most effective use of the library resources in this state."

It was the first major change in Wisconsin library statute since the establishment of the Wisconsin Free Library Commission in 1895.33

On March 1, 1972, the Division for Library Services granted provisional certification to the first four Wisconsin Library Systems: the Milwaukee County Federated Library System, the Wisconsin Valley Library System, the LaCrosse Area Library System, and a Multi-County Library System centered in Ashland that would later become the Northern Waters Library Service.34 By January of 1979, 15 public library systems had been established in 64 Wisconsin counties.35 That number increased to 17 in 1981 with the addition of the Kenosha County Library System and the Waukesha County Library System.36

An analysis in 1982 found that there were 354 public libraries in the state with only 25 not participating in a public library system. Prior to the establishment of library systems, an estimated 325,000 residents were unable to access library services, the establishment of the 17 federated library systems had reduced that number to 42,651.37 The issue of unserved residents was

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33 Wisconsin Library Bulletin, March-April 1971
34 Wisconsin Library Bulletin, May-June, 1972
35 The System and what it can do for you pamphlet
36 http://heritage.wisconsinlibraries.org/history/timeline (last accessed 19 Nov. 2018)
37 Wisconsin Library Bulletin, Spring 1983
eliminated in 1990 when Florence County became the last county in the state to become part of a public library system.  

In the mid-1990s, disharmony among libraries and needs in member counties led to withdrawal of counties from one system to join another. Wood County, Portage County, and Adams County withdrew from the Wisconsin Valley Library Service to join South Central Library System in 1996, making that system the state's largest, in terms of number libraries and outlets. Then, Fond du Lac County withdrew from the Mid-Wisconsin Federated Library System (MWFLS) to become a fifth county in the Winnefox Library System.

Around 2012, new dissatisfaction emerged within the MWFLS that ultimately led to its demise. Local library funding shortfalls began to affect library service, and the system was unable to provide adequate services to make up for these shortfalls, partially due to the reduction of state library aid that same year. In 2016, Jefferson County withdrew from the MWFLS to join Waukesha County in forming the new two-county Bridges Library System. The remaining two counties of the MWFLS (Dodge and Washington) recognized the inadequacy of their size and merged with the two-county Eastern Shores Library System to form the four-county Monarch Library System in 2017, reducing the total number of public library systems to sixteen.

The following map represents these sixteen regional library systems in Wisconsin:

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Appendix B: Funding Strategies and Sources

The PLSR project has not only produced the recommendations in this report, but a series of deep dives (in the form of workgroup reports) into each individual service provided by regional library systems. Taken as a whole, it is abundantly clear there are a variety of opportunities to improve access to services, and perhaps, to improve the effectiveness of the services themselves. To move forward without significant disruption to libraries and patrons, new service infrastructure must be put in place in parallel with the old. Realistically, it will also require additional sources of funding beyond what is currently available in the form of state aid to regional systems.

Through the process of recommendation development, a number of common themes have emerged in regard to potential sources of additional funding to support implementation.

- **In-Kind resources contributed by state agencies.** The Department of Public Instruction, Department of Administration and others have significant staff assets, though it is understood that resources are finite, and priorities are many. These agencies could incorporate implementation of PLSR recommendations into their planning processes. Examples of in-kind resources might include:
  - User experience (UX) or design consulting expertise in regard to a library staff continuing education portal and validation tracker;
  - Direct development of software or web applications related to a library staff continuing education portal and validation tracker or ILS discovery layer;
  - Web hosting for a library staff continuing education portal and validation tracker;
  - Administrative coordination of ongoing initiatives related to moving the PLSR recommendations forward.

- **Library Services and Technology Act funding derived from the “Grants to States” program.** Through this program, Wisconsin is allocated roughly 2.8 million dollars. Expenditures of these dollars are prioritized by the Department of Public Instruction. Future planning by the division could incorporate funding to support implementation of PLSR recommendations. Specific examples may include:
  - A grant category to support a regional delivery pilot build-out;
  - A grant category to support development of a state-scale discovery layer;
  - A grant category to incentivize development and implementation of system best practices.

- **Library Services and Technology Act funding derived from other specific grant programs.** A number of non-block grant programs exist, including the “Laura Bush 21st Century

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Librarian” and “National Leadership Grant for Libraries” programs. Other programs may be established in the future. These programs may provide an opportunity to acquire funding for components of the recommendations that require more in-depth work. Examples may include:

- Grant applications designed to fund additional project management capacity.
- Funding related to the Wisconsin Information System for Education (WISE) program. The WISE program is focused on creating and coordinating the services and infrastructure required to improve how we use data to learn and educate. This program has recently been broadened to include libraries. It is possible that WISE-related funding (or other assets) may be allocated to implementing certain recommendations. Examples may include:
  - Funding the development of a uniform set of ILS communication messages;
  - Using the list of ILS communication messages to build a universal ILS communicator tool to aid regional delivery pilots;
  - Working with ILS vendors who do business in Wisconsin to ensure compliance with uniform communication specifications;
  - Funding and coordinating a process of product evaluation.

- Increase in state aids to the regional library systems. Annual state aid funding is allocated according to state statutes and the administrative code. However, the library community could establish future legislative priorities which include requesting a modest increase in state aid which the existing systems would use to collectively fund specific implementation components of PLSR recommendations. Examples may include:
  - Funding for the development of a universal ILS communicator tool to aid in regional delivery pilots;
  - Funding designed to ease transition of any changes resulting from a modified funding allocation formula;
  - Any components of the recommendations or opportunities identified through the PLSR process with strong collaborative potential.

This document should be read as an initial consideration of potential funding sources. It is possible other sources may exist.

Appendix C: Additional Considerations

In developing this report, it became clear to the Steering Committee that there are a number of important issues or concerns that are applicable on a broader scale. Therefore, this appendix was developed as a repository.

Budgeting for Effective Outcomes
Implementation of any of the recommendations contained in this report must be adequately supported. Therefore, at minimum, budgeting must be developed, and funding allocated for meetings, mileage and necessary administrative overhead. Sufficient funding must also be allocated should professional project management be required. Other funding may be required for additional studies relating to funding, risk/benefit or legislative analysis beyond that which has already occurred.

Implementation
One of the most common themes expressed by the library community through feedback during the PLSR process is that change should be rooted in sound empirical research, well-planned, incremental and voluntary. The Steering Committee understands that, in order to satisfy these imperatives, the ways and means used to implement these recommendations may differ from those described in this report. The Steering Committee encourages all stakeholder groups to consider the best interests of library patrons at every level moving forward.

Implementation Teams
In writing this report, the Steering Committee considered the concept of “implementation teams”. Small teams of individuals appointed by the State Superintendent is one possible method of bringing formal organization to the transition from recommendation to action. Members of implementation teams would be expected to have a high degree of relevant professional experience with the given topic. In some cases, these teams may be paired with a project manager. As an alternative to DPI-appointed implementation teams, stakeholder groups within the library community could collaborate to create some of the management structures necessary to make headway on recommendations, including implementation teams.

Incremental Approach
Using an incremental implementation process, measure feasibility in an ongoing fashion through data gathering, cost analysis and evaluation of standards.

Leadership
Effective leadership will be required in order to implement any of these recommendations. Based upon the body of work completed by the Steering Committee, project managers, consultants, and service workgroups, leadership in implementing any of these recommendations can come in many different forms. While DPI occupies a unique position in the architecture of library service in Wisconsin, it is not possible for them to take-up and implement these recommendations on their own. Nor is it possible for library systems to implement these recommendations on their own. The Steering Committee encourages DPI, the regional systems and the greater library community to become active partners in transforming these recommendations into smart, meaningful, effective changes that will benefit library patrons.
Procurement
Any procurement process should emphasize results over cost. For example, selection of a platform simply because it complies with DPI procurement guidelines and is low-cost would not be appropriate and should be avoided through process design.

Project Management
Many of these recommendations are such that a great deal of management will be required to ensure positive outcomes. Some of the hypothetical duties of a project management entity might include:
- Facilitating the work of implementation teams;
- Serving as a communication bridge between stakeholder groups;
- Working with the regional systems to achieve necessary levels of collaboration and crowd-funding;
- Providing vision and direction when such is not readily available from the implementation team or greater library community.

To this end, the Steering Committee recommends that the Department of Public Instruction consider the following scenarios:
1. Retain a full-time project manager dedicated solely to managing all service improvements contained in this report from “recommendation” to “completion”. In this scenario, recommendation implementation would more than likely need to be handled one by one. This method may be preferable.
2. Take a contract-based approach to project management. Retain project management services to handle individual recommendation implementations as needed.

South Central Library System
It is of unique importance to note the role of the South Central Library System in statewide resource sharing. Statewide delivery exists in Wisconsin in significant part due to the South Central Library System’s work in the early 1990’s to establish it. As the service grew, it required that SCLS relocate to a larger facility, and develop internal management and logistics structures to support both the statewide service and SCLS’s delivery service to its member libraries.

Vendor Abandonment
Any competitive bid processes will not make final decisions of service providers based on cost alone. Service stability is of paramount importance. The average per delivery stop costs that currently exist in the state is essentially equal between the systems utilizing a contracted delivery service and those operating an in-house service. A balanced approach to maintain service stability can be done in a way that is also most cost effective.

Vendor Services vs. In-House Development
According to the Delivery Workgroup Report, a hybrid approach of contracted vendors and in-house delivery operations is needed for a stable delivery service. Bringing this same approach to any necessary procurement process associated with other recommendations may also be valuable.