

10 January 2020

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Half Year Executive Director Goals progress report for FY 2020

Goal 1. Implement the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

The strategic plan progress report, also in this packet (written by Mary Witt), goes into detail on our strategic plan goals, activities and outcomes and impact. All of my goals also support and advance the strategic plan, so taken together they provide both a high level and a detailed report on our projects and how they impact our members.

Goal 2. Ensure RAILS financial sustainability and continue to find efficiencies.

Delivery is a very large percentage of our annual budget (over 30%). We have worked with the Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis (LASA) at SIU Edwardsville over the past four years to find efficiencies in our delivery service. More details are provided below under Goal 7.

We regularly and continually look for ways to improve efficiency and to analyze whether our services are as cost effective as possible. If we can streamline or improve efficiency then we can use the funds to offer more services to members.

Our Finance department regularly looks at our investments to find the best possible return on investment. Jim Kregor serves on the LIRA and LIMRiCC boards which provide our insurance coverage; he has a birdseye view of their operations and helps to ensure their operations are efficient also. He also monitors their financial sustainability carefully.

Our monthly financial reports provide continuing accountability and transparency.

Goal 3. Work with ISL, ILA and member libraries to implement system membership standards and include them in data collection done for IPLAR and/or the annual certification process.

After a number of years of work on the standards, and lots of compromises and revisions, we have finally achieved agreement on standards and next steps with the state library. We started out with very detailed standards for each type of library – public, academic, school and special.

After many conversations with RAILS staff and members, and with Greg McCormick, we are taking a more incremental approach and one that is based more on library development. We will begin by including standards related to education, collection expenditures, hours open, and bibliographic access or availability of an online catalog, into the certification process in 2021. This is also the year that the per capita grant application for public libraries will change from focus on a specific aspect of *Serving Our Public* standards or chapters to a wider look at the services and needs of a public library as a whole. We are also having conversations with ILA and ISL about oversight and ownership of the standards – for example, responsibility for compliance and development. Ultimately, systems, state library and ILA all have an interest and a responsibility in setting standards that will assist libraries in developing and enhancing the services they can provide to users.

Goal 4. Work with ISL and IHLS to plan for possible funding increases in FY 2021.

Through the ILA Public Policy Committee, RAILS staff prepared and submitted a proposal to establish new funding for statewide access to online databases for all system members. We created a survey that asked member libraries to prioritize databases and we researched statewide database access in other states. We are waiting to see if this funding will be included in the Secretary of State’s budget. We also assisted in the development of a proposal to increase per capita grant funding. Planning will continue.

Goal 5. Integrate new data position in to RAILS projects and culture; use data to evaluate RAILS services and change them as needed; collect data from RAILS members to help tell the library story and to assist libraries in evaluating their services.

Grant Halter has contributed a tremendous amount to many projects and to the overall RAILS approach to projects. We are getting into the habit of incorporating data collection and impact of projects in much of our work. He assisted with standards work by helping us to ask the right questions. Some examples of activities and achievements related to this goal:

L2 redo – making sure that we will be easily able to get accurate data from L2

Delivery – streamlining how we collect volume data from libraries

Cooperative purchases – Comparing pricing and offerings among vendors

Better surveys and analysis – asking questions differently to obtain more useful and accurate results

Better understanding of members – getting better data about members, and creating tools that members can use for advocacy.

Goal 6. Implement the campaign to tell the library story.

Mary and her team have been providing regular updates at board meetings about the campaign but here are some statistics:

Since the *mylibraryis*.. website went live on July 15, 2019, there have been approximately 3650 visits to the website with 10,700 pages viewed. Wednesday is generally the day of the week with the most visits, due to mentions and links in the weekly RAILS E-News. The Sharing Showcase (where libraries' marketing materials and stories can be added) and Blog are the most popular areas of the site. As January 3, a total of 143 items (flyers and other printables, videos, stories, etc.) have been submitted to the site on behalf of 65 different libraries.

Also as part of the campaign we are working on talking points for libraries to use to tell their stories and advocate for their services. Staff presented about the campaign at both ILA and AISLE conferences and there will be an article about it in an upcoming *ILA Reporter*.

Our new video, *Elders of the Internet*, tell the story about why libraries are even more important in the age of the internet. It will be ready for the legislative meetups and we are planning a national ad campaign. It stars Nick Offerman.

Goal 7. Plan for implementing changes to delivery and hubs.

Mark, Grant and I met with Heartland, LASA and state library staff in Springfield late in December. LASA staff presented their report that looked at optimal locations for delivery hubs. We have been waiting for this study in order to make decisions about the status of both the Coal Valley and East Peoria buildings. Staff is currently analyzing the recommendations and will bring a full report to the board for review and make decisions.

Greg Pronevitz, a library delivery expert and long-time colleague, is looking at other aspects of delivery in a three phase study:

- Phase 1 will assess the pros and cons of in-house vs. outsourced delivery in the Chicago metropolitan area. We have outsourced a significant part of this work since January 2014 and want some comparative data and five-year projections to aid in future decisions. Estimated completion date: end of December 2019.
- Phase 2 will evaluate operations in all four RAILS delivery hubs (Bolingbrook, Coal Valley, East Peoria, and Rockford) and measure them against responses to an RFI (Request for Information) for outsourced delivery services to these areas. Many of the areas served by these hubs are much more rural than our currently outsourced areas, so there are different delivery issues to consider. Estimated completion date: end of June 2020.
- Phase 3 will look at possibilities for automating sorting and labeling. Currently, all sorting and most labeling are manual procedures. Implementing automation would require capital investment, but could pay off long-term by improving efficiency, sorting accuracy, and cost-effectiveness. Estimated completion date: end of August 2020.

Goal 8. Help libraries plan for increases in the minimum wage.

We are working with Jamie Rachlin, a financial consultant, to provide assistance to libraries in planning their budgets to meet the minimum wage increases. We has worked with dozens of RAILS libraries to develop budget projections that incorporate the increases in the minimum

wage from 2020 to 2025. We are also providing workshops for libraries on how to deal with the increases. Additional assistance is planned and will evolve as libraries questions change.

Goal 9. Study the issues of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and find ways that RAILS can help libraries deal with the issues.

As a start, some RAILS staff have attended workshops and met with colleagues with experience related to this topic. We will begin a project in 2020 to look at the RAILS culture and implicit bias; it will be part of our annual staff day as well as ongoing staff training.

Goal 10. Support and expand current resource sharing projects Explore More Illinois and Find More Illinois. Expand online resources available to member libraries, including investigation of funding for statewide database access for all Illinois libraries.

Explore More Illinois has grown exponentially since it was launched in April. We were discussing next steps the other day and could hardly believe it has only been around since April of 2018. As I write this, there are more than 200 libraries and 28 attractions participating around the state. We have recently spoken with staff at the Wisconsin Library System (WILS) and they are very interested in joining with us to expand Explore More Illinois to Explore More Midwest, with attractions in Wisconsin and perhaps even more states later on. Plans for 2020 include further expansion with Heartland and the addition of several marquee attractions (to be identified).

Find More Illinois is also growing. Frankfort Public Library is the first SWAN library to join FMI. The Bloomington Public Library goes live at the end of January. We are very pleased at this addition as they are not currently part of any LLSAP or other consortium. This should greatly expand the resource sharing at Bloomington, and encourage other stand-alone libraries.

We are planning enhanced marketing and publicity for Find More Illinois in 2020, and we do know of strong interest from some large stand-alone libraries.

Goal 11. Continue board engagement activities.

We had an excellent board orientation session in July. The board portal on the RAILS website is active. We have stepped up our reports at board meetings to include presentations from outside specialists to increase both board and staff understanding of library issues, especially school, special and academic library issues.

The Advocacy Committee has been very active and has established goals. The Universal Service committee met and had a very productive discussion, as described below in Goal 13. Many board members attended ILA and have signed up for the ILA legislative meetups. I am very pleased with all of the board activities and hope board members are also!

Goal 12. Work on adoption of Simply E in member libraries and member library consortia.

There has not been much progress on this goal. Simply E is a tough sell because it does not include some of the major ebook and e-audio service providers. We think there is going to be very good news on this front in early 2020 which should help adoption. Also, I will be meeting with the ELSUM group in early January to explore the interest of this group.

Goal 13. Make progress on universal service plan through possible law changes and practical projects to expand library service.

I am pleased with incremental progress on this goal.

During the summer, we worked with Ancel, Glink to develop an amendment that would remove barriers for non-district public libraries wishing to merge with other libraries to form a district. We presented this to the ILA Public Policy Committee and are working on some recommended revisions.

During the fall, we did a survey of libraries on how they serve the unserved and learned a great deal. Libraries really want to provide service to the unserved and they are often confused by the laws and rules relating to unserved residents and non-resident cards. They also have developed ways of serving non-residents based on local needs. We are working with ISL and Heartland on a new FAQ to reduce confusion among member libraries on the actual law and rules about unserved residents and non-resident cards. At a November meeting of the Universal Service Committee, we discussed the survey in detail and agreed to work with the state library to determine what changes can be made to non-resident laws and rules that will help libraries and residents. Some specific ideas:

- Kids cards – for unserved residents under the age of 18
- Summer reading cards
- Temporary cards for teachers or students
- Expanding reciprocal borrowing to include school libraries so a school ID or library card could be used at a public library
- A tax bill formula based on the entire RAILS region would bring greater equity and affordability of cards
- Little Free Libraries in Joliet could be replicated to encourage reading and library use.

We agreed to look at all of the ways libraries circumvent the law, without realizing it, and determining if there is a downside to providing different kinds of cards.