

September 15, 2021

TO: RAILS Consortia Committee – LLSAP Sustainability Working Group

FROM: Deirdre Brennan, RAILS Executive Director
Anne Slaughter, RAILS Director of Technology Services

SUBJECT: Brainstorm analysis and next steps

Brainstorming Session Notes

The following is the results of the Working Group's brainstorming session on August 30, 2021, transcribed and organized into basic categories.

Possible LLSAP actions

- Explore collaborations among LLSAPs
 - Merger of existing LLSAPs
 - Multi-LLSAP contracting for automation systems, software packages
 - Share staff between LLSAPs
 - Collaboration between LLSAPs for providing extra services
- Examine and establish appropriate LLSAP service levels to address affordability as well as the need to increase revenue
 - Increase membership fees
 - A “concierge services” membership level
 - Less expensive membership level with fewer services
- Explore alternative funding sources at library or LLSAP level

Possible RAILS actions

- Explore alternate options for direct support to LLSAPs. Ideas include:
 - Offer RAILS support for innovation and capital investment, not annual operating expenses.
 - Offer RAILS grants to LLSAPs for infrastructure improvement
 - Explore a non-reciprocal patron equalizing grant. A reduction in LLSAP member libraries results in a shift of patrons to other member libraries. Resource sharing burden remains the same even though the LLSAP number of libraries is reduced.
 - Establish an annual program (similar to e-rate) to fund certain LLSAP operational expenses
- Establish a separate consortium for school libraries

- Offer technology or automation grants directly to libraries that are small or with low budgets to cover cost of repairs, etc.
- Establish centralized services at RAILS that complement LLSAP services (e.g. deals and discounts, cataloging)
- Launch a concurrent effort to encourage libraries to become districts or more self-sustaining level of government, especially libraries that drop out of LLSAPs
- Have a dialogue with standalone libraries around why they won't join an LLSAP or FMI
 - Administrative rule requires libraries to report why they will not join shared bibliographic databases
- Articulate RAILS expectation or definition of who should/shouldn't be in an LLSAP and how materials should be shared. Define types/circumstances of libraries with recommendation of LLSAP or FMI.
- Define statewide or system-wide mindset of resource sharing – intention of sharing everything (Indiana example was referenced)
 - ILLINET code addresses reciprocal borrowing, resource sharing, collection development policies. Libraries are not to request types of materials they are not willing to loan.

Possible state-level actions

- Statewide ILS consortium
- Statewide subscription for FMI
- Eliminate state funding for OCLC; transfer to FMI
- Mandatory universal service for all of Illinois
- Move to county-sized libraries

Research/Messaging

- Compare how SHARE is organized. Look at percentage of libraries that are members, how budget of SHARE is set up, and compare to LLSAP budgets within RAILS. How does IHLS's concept of LLSAPs fit in and compare to RAILS?
- Examine per patron (per capita) data to determine if tax rate is too low or tax base is too small.
- Taxation is key. How to make it work when some don't want to pay?
 - Taxpayers not likely to support paying for resource sharing when they learn it benefits patrons outside of their taxing body service area. Patrons assume resource sharing results in more lending than borrowing.
 - Resource sharing is difficult and inefficient but important to patrons

Discussion

We (Deirdre and Anne) have had a number of conversations about the agenda and next steps for the Working Group. We had an excellent conversation with Leslie Bednar about IHLS and SHARE support, and both Leslie and Cassandra Thompson, the SHARE Director, will attend our meeting on the 20th. We think we need more information about LLSAP services, budgets, and the relative level of RAILS support in order to do the work defined in the Working Group charge and to move on to the prioritization of ideas from the brainstorming session.

We suggest the following questions and areas of further investigation to help guide a discussion of priorities:

1. What does success look like to library patrons?
2. Thinking outside of the current bounds of LLSAP geography and services, what is an ideal future?
3. How do essential LLSAP services continue in the RAILS service area, regardless of the RAILS financial situation?
4. How can we create efficiencies that will reduce costs for LLSAPs?
5. What more information do we need to do this work?
 - a. How do LLSAP costs compare for:
 - i. Cataloging an item
 - ii. Processing an ILL transaction
 - b. How do member fees compare across LLSAPs?