



125 Tower Drive
Burr Ridge IL 60527
630.734.5000
Fax: 630.734.5050
railslibraries.info

21 January 2022

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Deirdre Brennan

SUBJECT: Executive Director Goals for FY 2022 – progress report Quarter 2

As requested, here is the second quarterly project report on my goals.

Goal 1: Work with board, staff and members to develop a new strategic plan for RAILS that will be flexible, aspirational and practical, and will guide and help RAILS member libraries to provide innovative and essential services for their users.

At the January board meeting, Stephanie and Cindy will present a draft of the plan for the board to review. We had nine member input sessions, three focus groups for particular types of libraries, and three interviews with library leaders in Illinois. The steering committee met five times and the board had four sessions with the consultants and two sessions for staff. We developed a new vision statement, mission statement, goals and objectives for the board to look at. Also two sessions with staff plus a kick-off conversation and a staff meeting session,

I am very pleased with the plan draft. More work remains to be done on crafting the objectives and measurements of impact. I am also pleased we are right on schedule.

Goal 2: Continue advocacy work for statewide database funding.

Gail Bush arranged a meeting with Senator Laura Murphy and her chief of staff on December 8. We again presented the database proposal and the expanded Cards for Kids amendment. The Senator has pledged to file these two bills in January. We will monitor and provide updates to the board.

I have been in regular touch with the Senator's office. It is difficult to assess what is happening in Springfield; like everything else, the business of the General Assembly is affected by COVID.

Goal 3: Ensure that RAILS is financially stable; investigate revenue streams, increases to the APC grant, restructuring and other ways of being more efficient and economical while still providing needed services to members.

As I reported to the board previously, we have received two grant awards totally \$164,406 for work on L2 and cataloging of non-english language materials for our members (we are doing this in concert with IHLS and their Catalog Maintenance Center. The CMC catalogs special

collections materials – we do the other materials). We are also reducing our expenditures on the Biblioboard platform, focusing on the most used resources and the Illinois author aspect which is most important to our users. We are continuing to look at other expenditures and revenue streams as well restructuring the Finance and HR departments to streamline and hopefully save some money. And, we continue to advocate for increases in system funding.

Goal 4: Continue to work on the EDI initiative; improve RAILS internal culture, work with board EDI committee to meet the needs of members; establish a cohort of libraries to receive training; infuse EDI into all aspects of the strategic plan and the process to create the plan.

Work is continuing and excellent progress has been made this year. Biz will give a full report to the board at the January meeting. We have continued required training for all staff; monthly meetings of the Climate Team as they work on specific projects related to the RAILS culture; refocused the EDI Board committee to be an advisory committee and plan to launch a library training cohort for interested members.

The draft strategic plan contains an equity-focused goal, as the board will see during their review, and EDI issues are also part of all other goals with appropriate objectives.

Goal 5: Continue advocacy efforts for all types of libraries, and for multitype collaboration. Expand advocacy committee to include members and work closely with ILA, IHLS and AISLE.

Robin Helenthal is now chair of the Advocacy committee, and Amy Walsh, a high school librarian from Joliet has joined the committee, as has Juanita Harrell who served on strategic plan steering committee and is DuPage County law librarian. The committee was without a chair for three months but we are now getting back up to speed.

We are continuing our monthly meetings with AISLE, IHLS and ILA (we are sometimes joined by state library staff also).

Goal 6: Identify data needs of member libraries and provide services to meet them as appropriate.

Not much to report on this goal yet as Grant has been mostly focused on internal data work related to the E-Read formula, the E-Read grant and certification, but it remains a priority and a need expressed by members in the strategic plan.

Goal 7: Continue to grow cooperative purchasing program and investigate revenue opportunities.

In FY21, the Deals & Discounts program of opt-in purchases grew from \$1 million dollars to \$1.3 million. Members saved over \$1 million dollars through advantageous pricing. Five new resources have been added to the program in the last quarter of 2021. To continue to increase the scope and efficiencies of the cooperative purchasing program, RAILS purchased the ConsortiaManager platform in Spring 2021 and is in the process of migrating data and developing the supporting workflows. The Director of Library Resources and Programs meets regularly with Consortia Purchasing Managers across the nation to explore opportunities, best practices and initiatives, including potential revenue opportunities.

Goal 8: Focus on the needs of school libraries; add specific questions to certification; work with AISLE, ISL and IHLS to gather complete and accurate data about school libraries in Illinois.

As described in Goal 5, we are continuing our very productive monthly meetings with AISLE, IHLS and ILA. We have added specific questions to certification for 2022 and we expect these questions will greatly increase our understanding of school library budgets and staffing, and the effects of the pandemic. The state library is also working with us on this project and has expressed willingness to fund this work. We will also be hiring the Research Assistant to help with getting complete and accurate data from schools that do not provide it through the certification process.

.

Goal 9: Continue efforts to identify technology and other methods that will modernize delivery services and bring financial efficiency.

There is a memo in the meeting packet that describes the delays in finalizing our decisions related to the delivery RFP. We will give a full report at the February meeting.

.

Goal 10: Develop closer relationships with IHLS and CPL.

We are working on this. We have collaborated with IHLS on our school library data project and policies and procedures related to COVID. We are also developing a joint communication plan for our cataloging services. Monica and I met with the new CPL Commissioner, Chris Brown, on Friday, January 14 and have set up monthly chats. We had an excellent conversation about shared needs and how we can help each other. He was particularly interested in our CE offerings. Also, Debbie Baaske is doing a presentation for CPS librarians on RAILS services; this is good for our relationship with CPS and may help with inroads with CPL also.

Goal 11: Restructure the Finance and HR departments, as appropriate to provide excellent financial stewardship and appropriate leadership of the finance and HR work at RAILS.

Completed. The organization chart is on the agenda for approval as it has been revised in light of the restructuring. We are still analyzing the financial implications of the restructuring, but we do know that it results in salary savings.