RAILS
REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM

April 21, 2023

TO: **RAILS Board of Directors**

FROM: **Monica Harris**

SUBJECT: **Draft FY 2024 Operational Plan**

OVERVIEW:

We are currently in the midst of budget preparation for FY24. We are working diligently to present you with the most accurate and efficient financial figures available. Huge thanks to Finance Manager Sharon Swanson and her team as well as the valuable perspective of our Executive Team and staff for their work throughout this process.

The Illinois State Library has instructed us to submit an operational plan and budget based on annual revenue of $11,871,714, which is funding from the Area and Per Capita Grant. This does not include additional projected revenue of approximately $1.7 million, consisting chiefly of fees from services and materials (including eRead IL and the ILDS contract) and investment income of approximately $700,000.

In keeping with our process in previous years, what you see here is not a final budget. We will present a final proposed detailed budget at our May board meeting. We are still finalizing the anticipated costs of inflation, vehicles and fuel, salary increases including addressing compression in our pay grades, as well as details for potential expanded services. What you will see below are some compiled highlights and considerations as we currently understand them. We look forward to discussing these with the Board at the April meeting.

INCREASED EXPENSES:

Inflation is driving prices up generally and is affecting salaries. We are seeing library salary increases in the neighborhood of 3-5%. Of course, we need to remain competitive and are considering between a 4-4.5% increase across the board raise.

Healthcare costs continue to increase, with an overall increase of 11% for this year. We also expect increases in property and casualty insurance premiums for FY2024.

Compression in our salary scale continues to be an issue. We have prioritized a re-benchmark of salaries across the organization, which hasn't been done since 2020. This may result in

recommendations for increased salaries for some positions in future years. We are also fielding requests for additional staffing support in multiple areas and expect to make decisions about these requests as needed as the budget moves into its final draft.

Replacement vehicles remain to be a top priority for FY24, after years of no vehicle purchase availability. We are working with multiple dealerships on the ability to place these requests, but pricing on these vehicles has increased significantly in recent years. At least $720,000 will be budgeted for vehicle replacement. Facilities upgrades are also needed, including new carpeting in Coal Valley, replacement of a faulty outdoor sprinkler system and sliding door at Burr Ridge, and the need to address the patio structure at Burr Ridge, which is failing.

Additional IT infrastructure changes are also needed, with printers, firewalls, and monitors scheduled for replacement as they are all at end-of-life. We also must modernize the network cabling at Burr Ridge through a redesign and replacement project, and audit our security practices as best practices around security evolve quickly in the current environment.

NEW SERVICES:

Through the FY2024 Draft Operational Plan, you'll see several examples of new or expanded initiatives in response to member needs, in addition to ongoing efforts. These initiatives come straight from our strategic plan, as well as our purpose as described in the Illinois Library System Act. Our goal, as always, is exemplary resource sharing – bringing economies of scale to serve member needs and save tax dollars for all. Several examples of these expanded services are highlighted below:

Data Driven Analysis and Evaluation:

Standards and evaluations developed to better understand deals & discounts, delivery, LLSAPs, and the eRead Illinois pricing model.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):

Support ongoing of new staff through the employee connection program, designed to help build an inclusive culture and improve employee retention.

Offer additional EDI training targeted at public library trustees.

Conduct full analysis of RAILS Employee Handbook through an equity lens.

EDI Trainer/Presenter Directory available for member libraries.

Find More Illinois (FMI):

Evaluate Find More Illinois for potential add-on services, including an ILS aimed at nonautomated or under automated libraries.

Member Engagement:

Development of member engagement metrics that can be used to address the findings of the Service Inequities study.

Additional in person meeting opportunities at RAILS locations in FY24.

Development of regular, targeted email communications for academic, school, and specialized libraries.

Partnership:

Rebrand of Explore More Illinois in partnership with the Chicago Public Library and the Illinois Heartland Library System to address relevant issues with the marketing of the program, as well as using the opportunity to further its identity as a statewide program.

Celebration of the ten-year anniversary of eRead Illinois.

Joint Board Meeting of RAILS and IHLS Boards targeted for April 2024.

RAILS Infrastructure:

Development of a Succession Plan for RAILS in conjunction with the RAILS Board Policy Committee.

Software enhancements for Consortia Manager, RAILS website, time tracking, and data mapping software.

Planning of an in-person staff day for FY 2024.

RAILS FY 2024 System Area and Per Capita Grant Application - DRAFT

3.0 System Operational Plan

This document presents the Reaching Across Illinois Library System's (RAILS) operational plan for FY 2024. Our overarching goal in implementing this plan will be to ensure that we are providing the best possible service to all levels of library staff at RAILS member libraries of all types and sizes across our 27,000 square mile area and helping them to provide the best possible service to their customers.

As a part of this effort, we look to increase collaborations with our statewide partners to share best practices, to work on cooperative projects to benefit Illinois libraries of all types and sizes, and to make the most efficient use of system funding. Examples of these proposed collaborations appear throughout this document.

This plan was developed with a great deal of input from RAILS members as is required by the administrative rules for library systems, including feedback received at RAILS member update sessions; at the Meet and Greet sessions held throughout our area to welcome RAILS' new Executive Director; at visits to member libraries, both in-person and virtual; via various surveys conducted of our membership as described throughout this document; and other means.

This document follows the arrangement of the new RAILS strategic plan approved by the RAILS Board on January 28, 2022. All activities included in this plan are aligned with and support statutory priorities for Illinois library systems as noted.

Strategic Plan Goal One: *RAILS provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing for all member libraries.*

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
Enhance the sharing of knowledge and best practices through member networking and communications between all types of libraries	Plan/schedule virtual and in-person networking opportunities for staff at all levels at all sizes and types of libraries (academic, public, school, and specialized) to share best practices on a variety of topics Work with statewide partners, including the Association of Illinois School Library Educators (AISLE), Illinois Association of College & Research Libraries (IACRL), Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS), Illinois Library Association (ILA), Special Libraries Association-Illinois Community (SLA-IL), and others to plan networking opportunities for staff at different levels from different types of libraries and for public library trustees	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Publicize existing RAILS networking groups and the benefits of belonging to a networking group to all levels of staff at all types and sizes of libraries	
	Assist in the formation of new RAILS networking groups as needed	
	Continue to build and strengthen relationships and engagement with RAILS networking groups. Attend networking group meetings as appropriate to share the latest RAILS news and gather feedback on RAILS programs/services.	
	Continue with plans to offer member groups the opportunity to meet in person at RAILS service centers as possible, as was done pre-COVID 19	
	Continue providing subsidized Zoom and conference calling accounts to qualified RAILS networking groups	
	Continue transition to Listserv electronic mailing list software application and publicize benefits of new application to members	
	Encourage use of RAILS mailing lists, including lists geared toward different library types and sizes, and staff at all levels	
	Establish new mailing lists as needed. Sunset lists that aren't being used.	
Leverage economies of scale to provide greater purchasing power for member libraries so they can offer more resources to their users than libraries would be able to afford on their own	Continue to expand the RAILS discount and group purchase program by offering new deals for member libraries of all sizes and types as possible. Target publicity to help ensure that members know about specific offers available to their library type.	
	Gather input from members at all types and sizes of libraries on desired discounts/group purchases. Implement new offerings in response to this feedback as possible.	
	Continue to work with statewide partners to advocate for additional funding in the Secretary of State's budget for a statewide electronic resources	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	package to provide better economies of scale. Encourage member library staff to advocate for the package as appropriate. Continue the development of the comprehensive Consortia Manager platform to manage RAILS group purchases and discounts. Develop standards and evaluation metrics to gauge the effectiveness of the deals & discounts program. Widely publicize member savings to demonstrate the program's impact. Network with group purchasing managers nationwide to explore new opportunities and develop best practices **Career Online High School Program (COHS)** Continue to subsidize the cost and management of the COHS platform to enable libraries to offer adult learners accredited high school diplomas and career certificates Explore additional ways to expand and promote the COHS program, including: • Targeting libraries not yet participating in the program with large populations of adults who have not received a high school diploma • Targeting youth services library staff to help them promote the program to young parents without a high school diploma	
RAILS will continue to seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services.	Work with RAILS members of all sizes and types to determine the most appropriate delivery method to meet their needs Purchase additional delivery vehicles Consult with members on delivery issues/concerns on an ongoing basis. Widely promote the use of the delivery help desk. Continue to promote the delivery video training series developed in FY 2023 to help library staff learn about delivery procedures	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Promote the need for RAILS members to complete quarterly delivery volume counts. Consult with libraries on an individual basis as needed. Develop strategies to improve and achieve total compliance with quarterly delivery counts to get more accurate information on delivery volume. Examine count data to determine potential changes to existing delivery routes and best practices. Continue to evaluate the implementation of iPad app for drivers to track delivery volume and other delivery functions. Continue to explore additional opportunities to automate delivery processes to streamline services and improve efficiency. Continue providing high-quality statewide delivery services to CARLI (Consortium of Academic & Research Libraries in Illinois) members via ILDS (Illinois Library Delivery Service). Evaluate ILDS data to analyze changes in volume and respond with necessary and appropriate service changes. Continue working with GeoMARC (formerly Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis) on potential future improvements to RAILS delivery service, including delivery route efficiencies	
Work collaboratively with members, the Illinois Heartland Library System, and the Illinois State Library to identify and support appropriate and affordable shared catalog solutions and expand resource sharing to all libraries and residents	**General** Work with the RAILS Resource Sharing Committee to ensure sustainable, equitable resource sharing to help meet the first goal of the RAILS strategic plan. Promote/encourage the use of Find More Illinois statewide to help achieve this goal. Collaborate with the Illinois State Library (ISL), IHLS, Chicago Public Library System (CPLS), AISLE, CARLI, IACRL, ILA, SLA Illinois, and other stakeholders to expand resource sharing in Illinois Collaborate with and support the work of the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC)	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Promote/Support LLSAP Membership	
	Continue to support six LLSAPs (CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium, RSA-NFP, and SWAN) via the LLSAP Support Grant, offering the use of RAILS meeting spaces and other services	
	Continue to support RSA's efforts toward greater operational independence from RAILS, including their transition to an Illinois intergovernmental instrumentality and the process of beginning to employ their own staff	
	Continue to offer the Catalog Membership Grant to fund one-time costs for libraries wishing to join an LLSAP. Evaluate and iterate on the new grant process framework introduced in FY 2023.	
	Continue progress on the development of RAILCAR, a data collection and analysis initiative designed to supplement existing data related to LLSAPs and library automation. Develop specific criteria for LLSAPs and libraries to evaluate affordability. This tool will be integrated into the processes for both the LLSAP Support and Catalog Membership Grants.	
	Plan/conduct in-service day for all consortia staff to help them exchange news, ideas, and best practices	
	Promote the value of consortium membership to all types and sizes of RAILS libraries via RAILS communication tools, committee work, and member encounters	
	Continue to work with RAILS Consortia Committee to investigate and recommend ways to improve and increase consortial services in Illinois	
	Expand and Promote Find More Illinois (FMI)	
	Recruit libraries to join FMI Target promotions at libraries that would grow and enhance resources available through FMI	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	• Promote FMI benefits to nonautomated libraries	
	Continue to promote the growth of FMI, including via an extension of the FY 2023 incentive program and collaborating with CARLI to add I-Share members who wish to participate	
	Enhance the FMI program with add-on services as appropriate. Implement operational efficiencies as the program grows.	
	Provide training, consulting, and technical support to FMI libraries	
	Undertake feasibility, cost assessment, and planning process for adding a basic ILS component to FMI, aimed at automating nonautomated or under-automated libraries and making it possible for them to participate more fully in resource sharing	
	Continue to offer IHLS the opportunity to participate in FMI	
	Support High-Quality Cataloging	
	Continue to develop/deliver cataloging training in response to member feedback, including recurring opportunities and one-time workshops	
	Formally evaluate the effectiveness of RAILS cataloging training and cataloging services	
	Continue support and consulting in cataloging-related activities for eRead Illinois and Find More Illinois	
	Investigate the possibility of establishing a mentorship program for Illinois library catalogers in collaboration with IHLS' Cataloging Maintenance Center (CMC). Survey libraries to determine need/interest.	
	Explore the possibility of becoming a member of the Library of Congress' Program for Cooperative Cataloging/Name Authority Cooperative Program	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Continue offering World Language Cataloging Services Program as detailed below	

eRead Illinois Axis 360

Recruit RAILS libraries and IHLS non-SHARE libraries to join eRead Illinois

Support the training and marketing needs of eRead Illinois participants

Rollout new eRead pricing model introduced to participating libraries in FY 2023

Evaluate eRead content to ensure that it continues to meet member needs (see also EDI section below)
- Continue to enhance and develop additional content for K-12 students
- Regularly seek input from eRead participants on the collection and implement member suggestions as possible

Celebrate/promote the 10-year anniversary of eRead Illinois

Network with e-content managers nationwide to stay abreast of new developments and initiatives

Inkie.org Library

Continue to develop and promote the Inkie.org Library program to support self-publishing, Illinois authors, and Illinois e-content statewide

Continue offering group purchase pricing on BiblioBoard products for self-published authors

Publicize Inkie.org Library resources as being free (courtesy of RAILS) to all Illinois libraries and to all Illinois residents, including those not served by a public library

Provide current information on available resources for IHLS to share with their member libraries

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Explore More Illinois (EMI) Work with CPLS and IHLS to rebrand the program to reflect participation of libraries statewide, including implementing a name change and new logo. Publicize rebranding efforts widely. Collaborate with CPLS and IHLS to publicize EMI to all Illinois public libraries and community colleges and to encourage them to participate Continue to grow/expand the number and types of participating attractions, including attractions in other midwestern states. Collaborate with CPLS and IHLS to recruit attractions. Explore the possibility of making EMI available to users of academic, school, and specialized libraries Network with ePass (EMI's software) administrators nationwide to explore new opportunities and solutions and to share best practices **Other E-Resources Initiatives** Continue to participate as a partner in the CARLI Open Textbook grant Continue to develop RAILS Vendor Privacy Policies and VPAT (Vendor Product Accessibility Template) web pages with links to policies and VPATs for third-party vendors providing e-resources to public libraries • Based on member feedback and participation, determine whether to expand the project to include academic, school, and specialized libraries Provide ongoing support for the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and Illinois Digital Heritage Hub Support/publicize License to Read Act, making it possible for the Secretary of State to negotiate favorable pricing for e-books and e-audiobooks for libraries	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Partner with other library organizations to continue dialogue with publishers on need for better e-book access/pricing for libraries/consortia	

Strategic Plan Goal Two: *RAILS models best practices in equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion.*

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
RAILS will provide leadership in developing and providing resources that will support member libraries' efforts to provide equitable, diverse, and inclusive services.	Continue offering regular EDI training opportunities for all RAILS members. Collaborate with other Illinois stakeholders offering EDI-related CE to avoid duplication of effort. Offer EDI training targeted at public library trustees Evaluate the RAILS FY 2023 EDI Learning Cohort. Based on this analysis, consider forming a FY 2024 Cohort to begin in fall 2023. Launch an EDI-focused directory of trainers and public programmers Continue offering World Language Cataloging Services grant program statewide • Continue seeking grant funds from ISL to fund the statewide program • Continue publicizing the program to libraries of all types statewide • Continue to promote the benefits of IHLS' Cataloging Maintenance Center program and how that program differs from and works in conjunction with the RAILS program Continue to develop/promote an eRead Illinois collection and Inkie.org Library resources that address the needs of an ethnically and culturally diverse audience. Regularly evaluate the collection using industry respected tools to identify potential gaps.	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Recruit attractions for Explore More Illinois of interest to an ethnically and culturally diverse audience	
	Promote the Career Online High School Program (see above) as addressing the needs of a culturally, economically, and ethnically diverse audience	
	Publicize successful strategies libraries have used to promote and foster EDI via the My Library Is… campaign (see below)	
	Plan/conduct *Sparks* podcast interviews highlighting successful strategies libraries have used to provide EDI-related programs and services	
	Provide/promote opportunities for members from all types and sizes of libraries to share best practices and collaborate on EDI-related challenges through the RAILS EDI mailing list, EDI Pulse Page, and other activities	
	Promote and provide administrative support as applicable for RAILS EDI-related networking groups,	
	Include EDI elements in RAILS grants for members (CE Event grants, My Library Is… grants, etc.) when possible, to encourage applicants to provide equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible programs/services and to publicize these offerings to their communities	
Examine all aspects of RAILS policies, procedures, and core services through an equity lens and make needed improvements	Continue to grow and develop RAILS' external and internal EDI strategies and initiatives	
	Promote the accessibility features of the redesigned RAILS website and continue to monitor and make changes to the website with accessibility in mind	
	Conduct thorough analysis/evaluation of RAILS Employee Handbook to ensure that all language and policies meet our EDI goals	
	Continue to support the onboarding of new RAILS staff through an employee connection program	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	designed to help build an inclusive culture and improve employee retention Continue the work of the RAILS Climate Team to identify and implement internal best practices and initiatives for RAILS staff Continue holding regular EDI training sessions for RAILS staff	
Work with RAILS members of all types to identify and implement ways to diversify library governing bodies and staff to increase representation and better reflect the communities they serve	Continue to work with the RAILS Board Nominating Committee and others to attract diverse candidates to run for the RAILS Board. Promote RAILS' goal to develop a more diverse board in election publicity. Provide training/consulting/guidance for member libraries of all types to help them develop a more diverse and representative board Provide opportunities for libraries of all types to share best practices and strategies they have used to diversify their governing boards, including via the RAILS EDI Pulse Page and mailing list Provide training/consulting/guidance for RAILS members to help them diversify their hiring and recruitment practices Provide opportunities/tools for members to share strategies they have used to recruit a more diverse staff, including the EDI mailing list and the EDI Pulse Page	

Strategic Plan Goal Three: *RAILS assists member libraries in preparing for the future.*

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
Leveraging RAILS' power and influence in the Illinois library community, work collaboratively for additional funding for all types of libraries to ensure that libraries have the staffing, technology, and	Provide CE/consulting/tools to help libraries with different aspects of fundraising, including how to advocate for additional/continued funding from library administrators, funders, etc. Continue to schedule regular meetings with AISLE, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), IHLS, ILA,	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
infrastructure needed to offer essential and cutting-edge services to their communities	and ISL to discuss collaborative projects to help school libraries deal with funding challenges Participate in a wide variety of efforts to help advocate for continued/increased funding for all types of libraries, including: • ILA Legislative Meetups • Responding to American Library Association (ALA) calls to actions • Continuing to work with the ILA Public Policy Committee to discuss legislation of importance to libraries Keep RAILS libraries informed of important legislative developments affecting libraries Publicize opportunities for staff from member libraries to advocate for continued/increased funding for libraries as appropriate, including: • Encouraging members to attend ILA Legislative Meetups • Encouraging members to respond to ALA calls to action • Encouraging library staff to use talking points and other resources on the My Library Is… website • Encouraging members to contact their elected officials as appropriate and providing talking points on specific issues and programs as possible Develop video(s) through the My Library Is… initiative to demonstrate the importance of continued/increased funding for all types of libraries, including possible interviews with library patrons on the importance of libraries. Publicize the video(s) widely and encourage libraries of all types to use them to publicize the importance of continued/increased library funding. Work with the RAILS Board Advocacy Committee to educate the board about issues affecting RAILS and libraries that may require their advocacy efforts locally, regionally, or nationally	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
Help member libraries of all types and sizes demonstrate their value to their different stakeholders	**My Library Is… (MLI) Initiative** Continue to promote My Library Is… website resources via the *RAILS E-News* and other publicity channels Continue to encourage staff at all levels from all types and sizes of libraries to contribute posts to the My Library Is… blog to share best practices in telling the library story Continue to work with MLI Advisory Group (consisting of staff from all types of libraries) to publicize the initiative and to develop new activities to help libraries of all types to demonstrate their value Continue targeting MLI grant program at school libraries to help with the growing and dire need for school libraries to tell their stories more effectively Examine talking points available on MLI website and revise/expand them as necessary to make sure they help staff at all sizes and types of libraries to demonstrate their value to different stakeholders Continue to work with IHLS to further expand and publicize the initiative to staff at all types and sizes of libraries statewide Continue to work with AISLE, IACRL, ILA, SLA-IL, and other stakeholders on common goals/ activities re to the MLI initiative to avoid duplication of efforts (See additional campaign activities in previous section)	
Professional development and member engagement efforts are future-focused, crossing library types and	Provide CE/consulting on general resource sharing issues identified in the administrative rules, including interlibrary loan, the ILLINET	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
specific to individual library type needs	Interlibrary Loan Code, nonresident services, the RAILS Resource Sharing Policy, etc. Provide CE/consulting on library advocacy, management and practice, and other core service areas identified in the administrative rules Provide CE/ to help libraries meet per capita grant requirements and standards for their type of library Offer CE/consulting assistance and other resources to help libraries of all types and sizes to develop/maintain a current strategic plan Identify/monitor issues, trends, and challenges affecting libraries of all types and sizes and provide CE/consulting to help libraries respond to these issues and challenges Continue to develop Library Pulse pages on the RAILS website to help members respond to current issues, challenges, and trends Produce regular RAILS *Sparks* podcasts on current issues/trends affecting libraries of all types and sizes Continue to gather member input on CE needs from all sizes and types of RAILS libraries and implement training to meet those needs Continue to monitor library director retirements in the RAILS community and explore offering leadership training as needed to make up for the resulting loss of knowledge and experience Based on member input, continue to offer CE Event Grants to help libraries, networking groups, and library consortia plan/offer training events of interest to library staff. Continue prioritizing EDI-related topics for the grants as referenced above.	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Continue to partner with AISLE to identify training needs for school library staff and to offer joint CE opportunities based on that feedback	
	Continue to work jointly with the Illinois State Library and AISLE to offer school library staff PDH (Professional Development Hours) credits for RAILS-organized CE opportunities	
	Work with statewide stakeholders to plan and offer Directors University, the statewide training initiative for new public library directors. Publicize widely.	
	Work with statewide stakeholders to plan and offer Directors 2.0 to offer intermediate-level training for library directors. Publicize widely.	
	Work with statewide stakeholders to plan and offer Elevate Illinois Libraries Leadership Program to recruit and nurture future Illinois library leaders. Publicize widely.	
	Continue partnership with United for Libraries to provide statewide, online, on-demand trustee training. Publicize training widely.	
	Continue to support IHLS trustee training grant project. Publicize project to members as appropriate.	
	Collaborate with partners to offer additional trustee training opportunities in response to member feedback	
	Consult with/attend library board meetings as appropriate to help boards meet legal requirements and to develop leadership skills	
	Continue partnership with HR Source to provide CE and discounted membership. Publicize widely.	
	Continue partnership with Ancel Glink to offer statewide FOIA/OMA hotline. Publicize widely.	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard

Strategic Plan Goal Four: *RAILS leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen the Illinois library community and expand services to all.*

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
RAILS will continue to strengthen collaborative relationships with partner library organizations, including the Association of Illinois School Library Educators, the Chicago Public Library, the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois, the Illinois Association of College & Research Libraries, the Illinois Heartland Library System, the Illinois Library Association, the Illinois State Library, and the Special Libraries Association – Illinois Community.	**Service Standards** Continue conversations with ISL, IHLS, and other partners to explore possibility of revising system membership standards to help libraries of all types provide better service to their communities **L2 (Library Directory and Learning Calendar)** Ask ISL to continue to provide additional grant funding to support L2 Continue to provide statewide leadership for L2 - Host, maintain, and develop additional features - Provide ongoing user help and support to library staff, networking groups, and sponsor organizations (LLSAPs, ISL, library systems) - Facilitate the statewide advisory group (L2G2) Continue to contract with Aten Design Group for L2 support and development **Certification** Work with ISL, IHLS, and other partners to improve and enhance the annual certification process Work with RAILS members to ensure that they complete the certification process **Other Collaborative Initiatives** RAILS Executive Director continue to serve on Illinois State Library Advisory Committee Work with CPLS and IHLS to schedule meetings and other get-togethers for system staff	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	• Plan event at ILA conference in Springfield for any staff or board member interested in attending from any of the three systems • Schedule regular meetings to discuss statewide services and ideas for collaborating to promote those services • Plan a joint Board meeting for IHLS and RAILS systems for Spring 2024 Continue to schedule regular meetings with AISLE, CPS, IHLS, ILA, ISL, and others as appropriate to discuss collaborative projects to benefit school libraries as referenced above Collaborate with AISLE, IHLS, ILA, and ISL to plan an online Illinois School Library Training event, targeted at individuals working in school libraries with no formal library education Collaborate with AISLE, IHLS, ILA, ISL, and others to form a Regional Response Team to help libraries facing materials challenges Continue providing leadership and support to SLA-IL via the RAILS Member Engagement Manager publicizing SLA-IL activities and events and looking for opportunities for collaborations. RAILS' Member Engagement Manager will continue to maintain a seat on the SLA-IL Board as well. Continue regular meetings with the Commissioner of the Chicago Public Library to discuss collaboration possibilities Continue to engage in statewide efforts focused on broadband expansion, technology adoption, and digital equity issues as significant federal and state funding is distributed. Work to ensure that libraries are aware of and equipped to participate in these efforts. Continue to serve as sponsor for library-related conferences as possible, including conferences aimed at libraries of all types and different staff levels	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Partner on grant initiatives with library-related organizations to improve library service in Illinois and to help demonstrate the value of all types of libraries	
RAILS will continually seek to understand member perceptions of inequities in system services to better support academic, school, and specialized libraries, as well as public libraries of all sizes.	Promote the member centers for different types of libraries on the redesigned RAILS website • Mail promotional piece to academic, school, and specialized libraries highlighting the member center for their type of library • Send promotional piece via van to public libraries to highlight the public library member center Follow up on results of RAILS Services Inequity Study conducted in FY 2023. Publicize study findings and RAILS' planned action steps in response to the findings. Develop regular, targeted email communications for academic, school, and specialized libraries to ensure that they are aware of specific RAILS programs/ services of benefit to them and the latest RAILS news of possible interest to their library type Continue to meet with AISLE, CPS, IHLS, ILA, and ISL to address the needs of school libraries as referenced above Continue to work with other stakeholders statewide and beyond on school library data project (see next section) (See also Communications section below)	
Continuously evaluate RAILS programs and services to ensure that they are having an impact and are helping to create the best possible future for all member libraries	Continue to work with AISLE, CPS, IHLS, ILA, ISL, and other stakeholders statewide on the school library data project, with the goal of educating school library staff, administrators, boards, and other about the importance of school libraries and the need to support and fund them • Create an online, sustainable presence for Illinois school library data, with the goal of building a digital resource center for school library advocacy	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	• Brand project, including developing a name and designing a logo • Publicize the project widely, including conducting a social media campaign to publicize data being collected and benefits of project Follow up on results of RAILS Services Inequity Study as referenced in previous section Develop a centralized RAILS data hub to coordinate and manage incoming data sources used to support services for RAILS members and staff • Issue RFP to find someone to build a database linking all of our data • Establish organized file management system so staff are working from the same data sources • Make more organized use of IPLAR data to improve RAILS service offerings Continue to solicit member feedback via RAILS communication tools, surveys, and member encounters. Implement changes/additions to RAILS programs/services based on member input as appropriate. Ensure that we are getting feedback from libraries of all types and sizes in all geographic areas of the system. (See other sections of this document for plans to gather and respond to member feedback on specific RAILS programs/services)	
Collaborate with the Illinois State Library, the Illinois Heartland Library System, and other partners to develop a plan and timeline for achieving universal service	Continue to work with the RAILS Board Universal Service Committee to find and implement solutions to challenges related to the unserved in Illinois Continue to work with members to identify obstacles to libraries adopting the extended Cards for Kids Act legislation. • Encourage all libraries to extend service to all children in unserved areas • Promote RAILS talking points designed to help library staff demonstrate the benefits of adopting this legislation to their boards and other stakeholders	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Continue to work with statewide partners to seek legislative support for statewide access to electronic resources for all Illinois residents, including the unserved (see further details above) Publicize requirement for library boards to vote annually on participation in the nonresident program and for members to update their participation information via L2. Publicize the names of participating/nonparticipating libraries and share with ISL per statutory requirements.	

Other Administrative Activities

The following section details RAILS' planned FY 2024 activities to meet statutory priorities for Illinois library systems not included in the sections above.

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
Engage and communicate with members and potential members from all types of libraries throughout the RAILS area to ensure they are aware of system programs/ services of benefit to them and to better understand, anticipate, and meet their needs	**Member Recruitment** Engage with libraries of all types that express an interest in RAILS membership Visit potential members to ensure they meet membership criteria Work with RAILS Board on new member recommendations for approval by ISL **General Member Communication/Engagement** Promote available programs/services via RAILS communication tools and member encounters, including: • RAILS website • Weekly *RAILS E-News* • Continuing to ramp up our social media engagement efforts • Visiting as many members as possible, either virtually or in person, concentrating on libraries that RAILS has not visited or had any correspondence with in the past two years	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	• Offering to attend a meeting of all RAILS networking groups as specified above • Scheduling regular member updates • Using available type of library mailing lists and lists for different levels of staff to communicate about specific programs/services of interest • Offering "New Director Welcome" online discussions • Sending all new RAILS library directors a welcome communication to acquaint them with system programs/services • Offering an online "RAILS Refresher" to any interested library • Continuing to feature "RAILS Minute" videos with the RAILS Executive Director highlighting the latest system news • Exhibiting at library conferences, including conferences for different types of libraries and different levels of staff • Presenting programs at library-related conferences as appropriate to promote RAILS programs/services Contract for continued support for new RAILS website, to include: • Interface and automation to generate the quarterly delivery count forms • Design/theming work for potential EDI Trainer/Presenter Directory • Custom development of Gutenberg editor • Help building form for eRead Illinois signup/renewal period if Consortia Manager is not ready to handle this process • Miscellaneous design tweaks Continue to gather feedback on the redesigned RAILS website and make improvements/ enhancements to the site based on that feedback Plan and conduct a promotional campaign to increase the number of subscribers to the *RAILS E-News*	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Continue to make improvements to the weekly *RAILS E-News* based on the results of the FY 2022 *RAILS E-News* survey and other member feedback

Gather feedback from different levels of staff (including non-librarians) on how RAILS can communicate with them more effectively. Develop strategies to respond to this feedback. | |
| Engage and communicate with the RAILS Board of Directors to ensure that they are aware of RAILS programs and services, that they can serve as ambassadors for RAILS, and that their service on the board is as rewarding as possible | Communicate regularly with the board through the RAILS board mailing list and other means

Ensure that the board is aware of RAILS' progress in meeting the goals and objectives of our new strategic plan

Keep board informed about important issues for RAILS and for libraries of all types. Provide talking points for communicating with members about RAILS programs/services.

Plan/implement orientation session at Burr Ridge service center for all new RAILS Board members. Invite existing board members to attend for a refresher.

Schedule board meetings in different parts of the RAILS area as possible so the board can learn about different areas of the system and meet members from different areas

Continue to promote and encourage diversity on the RAILS Board as referenced above

Support board conference/meeting attendance as appropriate

Work with RAILS Board Policy Committee to establish schedule for regular review of RAILS policies | |
| Recruit RAILS staff as needed to meet roles specified in administrative rules and to support strategic plan goals and | Encourage/support professional development for staff

Continue to hold regular staff meetings to keep all staff informed of the latest RAILS developments | |

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
objectives. Actively seek a diverse staff in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identify, and other factors.	and to help staff at different service centers engage with each other Continue work of RAILS Employee Committee to develop collaborative activities for all staff • Plan in-person staff in-service day in FY 2024 Conduct salary benchmarking study to ensure that RAILS salaries are fair and equitable, to help retain highly qualified staff, and to attract new talent Develop a succession plan for RAILS in conjunction with the RAILS Board Policy Committee Continue discussions with new staff who have worked at RAILS for at least 90 days to gather input on their onboarding and orientation experiences. Make changes to RAILS' onboarding process as appropriate in response to this feedback. Continue to prioritize EDI-related staff activities and initiatives as referenced above	
Maintain robust technology infrastructure needed to carry out all RAILS programs/services	Replace printers, firewalls, and monitors at all RAILS service centers Redesign and replace network cabling at Burr Ridge service center Audit and improve security practices across wide area network and IT systems Establish formalized structure for staff to inform and request input on IT-related projects they are planning	