

September 19, 2025

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Anne Slaughter, Director of Technology Services

SUBJECT: FY2027 LLSAP Support Grants

As part of RAILS' commitment to ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing opportunities, we support the six independently operated and governed shared catalog consortia, known as Local Library System Automation Programs (LLSAPs), serving RAILS member libraries. RAILS LLSAPs are [Cooperative Computer Services \(CCS\)](#), [Pinnacle Library Cooperative](#), [PrairieCat](#), [Resource Sharing Alliance \(RSA\)](#), Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC), and [SWAN](#).

In an upcoming Service of the Month presentation, I will cover more information about these organizations, context for the relationships between regional library systems and LLSAPs, and the ways RAILS works with these important partners. In the meantime, we wanted you to be aware of a grant process which is currently underway.

The LLSAP Support Grant distributes about \$2.25M each year to support LLSAPs' efforts to enhance services, improve affordability, and boost the sustainability of their operations. The attached reports on their FY2025 awards illustrate the diversity among these organizations and their services, and the value of the support they receive from RAILS.

Applications for FY2027 grants were due on September 15 and we are currently in our review process, with grant award letters to be issued in late October. This is before RAILS begins developing our budget, but many of the LLSAPs' budget processes are well underway by Fall. This schedule provides the revenue information they need to finalize their budgets for membership approval. Due to these disparate budget timelines, awards are clearly conditioned on the availability of funding.

Data collected during the application process is used in a formula to calculate each LLSAP's allocation of the budgeted funding. Awards are primarily issued as quarterly payments beginning on July 1 of each year and reflected in the Contractual Services budget line. Portions of RSA's and PrairieCat's awards are in the form of services from RAILS, and estimated costs for providing these services are deducted from their allocations.

RAILS LLSAP Support Grant: Annual Report

Due on July 31

LLSAP name: SWAN

Date of report: 7/31/2025

LLSAP staff member or representative preparing report

Name: Aaron Skog

Title: Executive Director

Email: aaron@swanlibraries.net

Phone number: _____

Submission: Please email the report as an attachment to anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org.

1. Describe how RAILS grant funds were used. Attach any applicable supporting documents (such as LLSAP budget, memos, etc.) demonstrating the use of RAILS funds.

SWAN is a vital part of ILLINET, which per the Illinois Secretary of State, is defined as "the online consortial catalogs, known as Local Library System Automation Programs (LLSAPs) and the Illinois statewide Library delivery service (ILDS) funded by the Illinois State Library through grants to IHLS, RAILS and ILDS, [...] are key components of statewide resource sharing."

SWAN provides service to 25% of the library service population in RAILS and in turn fulfills 41% of the resource sharing occurring within RAILS. LLSAP funding to SWAN is awarded to all public member libraries to lower the annual membership fee to participate in the resource sharing consortium. Each public library in SWAN receives an equal amount of the LLSAP fund award. This equal distribution therefore favors libraries with limited funding.

For FY25, each public library in SWAN was awarded \$5,215 against their membership fees. A full explanation of SWAN membership fees for our multi-type consortium can be found online: <https://support.swanlibraries.net/about/budget>

2. Please describe any significant LLSAP activities in the time period covered by the report, such as membership changes, new services or policies, ILS platform updates and changes, governance changes, etc.

SWAN provides a library services platform (LSP) to all member libraries which includes a shared ILS for resource sharing, which during FY25 facilitated 2.2 million ILL transactions, and over 2.1 million reciprocal borrowing transactions within the SWAN consortium.

SWAN's LSP integrates e-content for all member libraries to provide a single search interface for physical material, eBooks, eAudio, eStreaming, and subscription e-content from EBSCO, Gale, and other vendors.

SWAN provides a service at no cost to six participating LLSAPs through its OCLC Holdings Manager, where each month the holdings for CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, RSA, SHARE, and SWAN update 25 million holdings in WorldCat. The OCLC Holdings Manager contributes more to WorldCat holdings than any other organization, excluding national libraries. Accurate library holdings in WorldCat allows ILLINET to process Illinois interlibrary loan requests and respond to requests from libraries outside of Illinois.

3. If optional in-kind services are used, please list services and describe any significant activities related to them. If your needs regarding these services have changed or you anticipate them changing, please describe how. (In-kind services include datacenter, delivery services to LLSAP facility, financial services, help desk ticket system, use of RAILS facilities for LLSAP staff, consortium staffed by RAILS employees, use of RAILS vehicles, and ILS phone notification dialer co-location.)

No in-kind RAILS services are used by SWAN.

4. For the RAILS services listed below, please indicate the ones in which any or all of your member libraries participate, and describe any significant activities, changes, or needs related to the services:

☒ eRead Illinois

50 libraries within SWAN's 100 library membership participate in eRead Illinois. This eBook platform is integrated within SWAN's public catalog using Aspen Discovery. SWAN's mobile application integrates eRead Illinois collection using a SWAN managed platform Aspen Discovery.

☐ Find More Illinois

No libraries in SWAN are using FMI.

☒ Explore More Illinois

SWAN established a connection to the EMI service in July 2019 using SWAN's OpenAthens, thus ensuring patron's personally identifiable information is passed to EMI using an encrypted method. The number of libraries participating is not certain, as SWAN does not manage EMI, but we estimate 75 SWAN member libraries are participating.

☒ Any other RAILS projects and group purchases that require ILS interoperability

The SWAN EBSCO group purchase arranged with RAILS has 49 public libraries participating in FY25. SWAN's LSP integrates this online research using SAML based authentication with a centrally managed service using SWAN's OpenAthens, and keyword indexes built in EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS). This arrangement provides the library patron with a seamless experience, where these online research tools are integrated into the SWAN catalog as a single search interface, using an active library card for access.

5. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns you would like to share with us? *(optional)*

Of the 623 public libraries reporting in Illinois Public Library Annual Report, 538 are members of an LLSAP, which is 86% of the total. Resource sharing by LLSAPs represents 93% of the total for Illinois. The RAILS financial grant to LLSAPs is an important component in the support of ILLINET. The success of ILLINET is built upon LLSAPs, library delivery, and the statewide catalog created using OCLC WorldCat Discovery and WorldShare ILL services.

We thank RAILS for the funding provided to allow widespread participation in the LLSAPs.

RAILS LLSAP Support Grant: Annual Report

Due on July 31

LLSAP name: Pinnacle Library Cooperative

Date of report: July 2025

LLSAP staff member or representative preparing report

Name: Matt Hammermeister

Title: Director

Email: mhammermeister@pinnaclelibraries.org

Phone number: 815-552-4277

Submission: Please email the report as an attachment to anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org.

1. Describe how RAILS grant funds were used. Attach any applicable supporting documents (such as LLSAP budget, memos, etc.) demonstrating the use of RAILS funds.

About half of the RAILS support grant is used to offset the consortium's growing personnel costs. Two years ago, we increased our staffing to two full-time employees. The funds from the LLSAP Support grant allow us to cover this increase in costs without burdening member libraries.

The remaining grant funds are used to help cover first-year costs for new projects that have not yet been budgeted for. This enables our consortium to launch new products or services quickly. In the near future, we are planning to launch a new discovery layer and will use the grant funds to cover the difference in costs.

2. Please describe any significant LLSAP activities in the time period covered by the report, such as membership changes, new services or policies, ILS platform updates and changes, governance changes, etc.

We have not had any membership changes, but in the past year, the board adopted two documents to help assist with any potential changes in the future. The New Member Library Director Orientation document serves as a welcome packet for new board members, whether they're new to their position or a new member in the consortium. It covers information about the board, Pinnacle staffing, the budget process and Pinnacle culture.

The board also approved a New Member Cost Calculator that allows us to quickly provide nearby libraries with an estimate of the costs to join the consortium. As we created this tool, we revisited some of the financial requirements to join, reducing a potential barrier to new members.

In May, we launched our new learning management platform, which now houses 13 training courses for member library staff.

3. If optional in-kind services are used, please list services and describe any significant activities related to them. If your needs regarding these services have changed or you anticipate them changing, please describe how. (In-kind services include datacenter, delivery services to LLSAP facility, financial services, help desk ticket system, use of RAILS facilities for LLSAP staff, consortium staffed by RAILS employees, use of RAILS vehicles, and ILS phone notification dialer co-location.)

No in-kind services used.

4. For the RAILS services listed below, please indicate the ones in which any or all of your member libraries participate, and describe any significant activities, changes, or needs related to the services:

☒ eRead Illinois

Fountaindale, Joliet

☒ Find More Illinois

Lemont, through June 2025

☒ Explore More Illinois

All six Pinnacle libraries participate

☐ Any other RAILS projects and group purchases that require ILS interoperability

5. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns you would like to share with us? (*optional*)

We're grateful for RAILS' ongoing support of resource sharing and are excited for another year of collaboration.

RAILS LLSAP Support Grant: Annual Report

Due on July 31

LLSAP name: Resource Sharing Alliance

Date of report: 30 July 2025

LLSAP staff member or representative preparing report

Name: Kendal Orrison

Title: RSA Executive Director

Email: kendal.orrison@railslibraries.org

Phone number: 630-734-5261

Submission: Please email the report as an attachment to anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org.

1. Describe how RAILS grant funds were used. Attach any applicable supporting documents (such as LLSAP budget, memos, etc.) demonstrating the use of RAILS funds.

RAILS grant funds were primarily used to cover staffing costs for RSA's 10 current RAILS staff positions. RAILS additionally supports RSA operations with building costs for the EP facility, HR, IT, Finance, Admin support, and more. RAILS Finance keeps detailed cost breakouts for all RSA costs. At the end of each FY, a 'true-up' in costs is created to ensure RSA has properly reimbursed RAILS for our costs. This year our staff dropped in size and cost due to staff turnover.

RSA lost 4 school members this year, making a total of 11 school members over the last two years. This is due to the combination of increased costs required to complete RSA's transition to full independence and the general lack of care and support for school libraries in many school districts. On the plus side, we added 2 new public library members this year.

The RAILS grant is the 'glue' that makes system membership affordable for most of our membership. Without the grant, RSA's membership would drastically contract, the support staff would be cut by half or more, and membership would be limited to RSA's current medium and large members due to increased costs.

While not directly supported by LLSAP grant funds, RAILS delivery is very important to RSA. In FY25, RSA members average 66.24% of their filled holds coming via delivery from other RSA members. For publics under 2K pop served, the figure was 89.92%, for publics between 2K-4K, that figure was 86.13%. Even our medium sized (4K-10K) members has 77.38% of their holds filled by other RSA members. Resource sharing isn't just our name, it's what we're enabled to do with RAILS overall support.

2. Please describe any significant LLSAP activities in the time period covered by the report, such as membership changes, new services or policies, ILS platform updates and changes, governance changes, etc.

- RSA lost 4 school library members and gained 2 public library members and a new public library branch at the end of FY25.
- All RSA member libraries, with the exception of McLean County Historical Society which doesn't circulate items, are now full members of RSA. We no longer have membership levels; everybody has access to everything under our new fee structure.
- Our plan to transition staff to RSA's direct employment this FY was canceled due to not having the correct EIN number. Thank you to RAILS for working with us to extend staffing support through Dec 2025! We did make progress on major issues:
 - IMRF application is awaiting the IMRF Board's approval
 - LIMRiCC is approved, just awaiting final paperwork and open enrollment
 - Missionsquare is setup and ready to go
 - New job descriptions finish and awaiting HR Source benchmarking
 - Employee Handbook is finished pending Board approval
- The RSA Board continues to spread it's wings and take more control as well as providing great ideas to move RSA along in the future.
- We signed a 2 year contract, +5 year optional extension, with SirsiDynix lowering overall contract costs by 20.7% without cutting their support, products, or services.
- We continue to run the most current versions of all ILS software, or are scheduled to be upgraded to the most current versions over the summer.

3. If optional in-kind services are used, please list services and describe any significant activities related to them. If your needs regarding these services have changed or you anticipate them changing, please describe how. (In-kind services include datacenter, delivery services to LLSAP facility, financial services, help desk ticket system, use of RAILS facilities for LLSAP staff, consortium staffed by RAILS employees, use of RAILS vehicles, and ILS phone notification dialer co-location.)

- Staffing support: RSA's support staff are all RAILS employees. This year we started with 11 FTE and ended with 10 FTE. We will not fill the open positions until staff independence. RSA staff moved from 1 day to 3 days a week in the office. Staff report increased learning and project completion rates as a result of working more closely.
- The Finance and HR departments continue to provide outstanding service in support of RSA. We'll miss RAILS HR support in the future. We will continue to utilize RAILS Finance support as long as it's offered. They provide outstanding, meticulous service!
- RSA visited over 1/2 our member libraries in person this year. The RAILS vehicles allow us easy scheduling and access for staff.
- RSA uses other RAILS services, mostly a wide variety of IT services. Much of the IT services will be replaced by RSA procured replacements in FY26. Final details of what will be including as part of the ongoing building rental are currently under discussion.
- The CMC finished their record cleanup project for RSA. We appreciate RAILS keeping the old OTRS Help Desk running until that project completed.
- The CMS Springfield equipment rack will, one day, be transfered directly to RSA. Until that happens, RSA will continue to reimburse all RAILS expenses related to that service.

4. For the RAILS services listed below, please indicate the ones in which any or all of your member libraries participate, and describe any significant activities, changes, or needs related to the services:

☒ eRead Illinois

With RSA's new flat membership, all RSA members except McLean County Historical will be added to eRead IL as soon as their users are entered into the system. In reality, this means adding Mason Memorial and the 2 new RSA members next spring or for FY27.

☒ Find More Illinois

RSA has 6 libraries active in FMI. Those libraries average about 100 outgoing loans and 30 incoming items a month. I don't heard much chatter about FMI from members at all. Most everything needed is found in other RSA members collections.

☒ Explore More Illinois

Increased downstate attractions continue to be popular among RSA patrons. Thank you for continuing to extend the reach of this program. Just about all RSA members participate in EMI. LOVE the new logo.

☒ Any other RAILS projects and group purchases that require ILS interoperability

RAILS group purchases tend to be things big, better resourced libraries can partake of. We realize small libraries aren't a good market for group purchases and are hard to support. But the blanket discounts are used by our members.

5. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns you would like to share with us? *(optional)*

This year didn't go quite as planned. RAILS willingness to work with RSA for staffing and support to help us through a difficult situation is very much appreciated. We're all trying to do the best for members and staff, and it's nice to see that reflected in the support and accommodation of our changing transition timeline.

RSA's staffing, and associate technical/IT transition should be completed by the end of FY26 meeting the full independence timelines outlined by RAILS in 2020. The support and guidance over the past couple of years have been appreciated.

We expect more 'training' of our members as they slowly realize RSA and RAILS aren't the same organization and don't do the same thing. We'll continue to support RAILS Delivery and other programs internally to our members as the combination of services is the only thing keeping some of our membership afloat.

Thank you for the support provided over the last year.

RAILS LLSAP Support Grant: Annual Report

Due on July 31

LLSAP name: Rock River Library Consortium (RRLC)

Date of report: June 19, 2025

LLSAP staff member or representative preparing report

Name: Jennifer Slaney

Title: Director

Email: Jennifer.Slaney@sterlingpubliclibrary.org

Phone number: (815) 625-1370

Submission: Please email the report as an attachment to anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org.

1. Describe how RAILS grant funds were used. Attach any applicable supporting documents (such as LLSAP budget, memos, etc.) demonstrating the use of RAILS funds.

Grant funds were used to purchase the following databases for the member libraries:
Gale in Context for the school libraries
Brainfuse for the public libraries
Novelist for all members

Funds were also used to purchase the app myLibro for Public and Jr/Sr high school libraries.

The Library Corporation (TLC) held their annual users group meeting via webinar and RRLC members were encouraged to attend with the fee.

Members also approved using grant funds to pay 50% of the TLC annual invoice again this year.

2. Please describe any significant LLSAP activities in the time period covered by the report, such as membership changes, new services or policies, ILS platform updates and changes, governance changes, etc.

This year RRLC updated their membership contract, previous contract referenced servers, phone lines, storage, etc.

3. If optional in-kind services are used, please list services and describe any significant activities related to them. If your needs regarding these services have changed or you anticipate them changing, please describe how. (In-kind services include datacenter, delivery services to LLSAP facility, financial services, help desk ticket system, use of RAILS facilities for LLSAP staff, consortium staffed by RAILS employees, use of RAILS vehicles, and ILS phone notification dialer co-location.)

4. For the RAILS services listed below, please indicate the ones in which any or all of your member libraries participate, and describe any significant activities, changes, or needs related to the services:

☒ eRead Illinois

Dixon, Milledgeville, Rock Falls, and Sterling Public Libraries, Dixon, Sterling and Rock Falls High School libraries

☒ Find More Illinois

Dixon, Milledgeville, Rock Falls, Sterling Public Libraries, Sterling and Rock Falls High School libraries.

☒ Explore More Illinois

Dixon, Milledgeville, Rock Falls and Sterling Public Libraries

☐ Any other RAILS projects and group purchases that require ILS interoperability

5. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns you would like to share with us? *(optional)*

RAILS LLSAP Support Grant: Annual Report

Due on July 31

LLSAP name: PrairieCat

Date of report: 7/1/2024-6/30/2025

LLSAP staff member or representative preparing report

Name: Carolyn Coulter

Title: Director

Email: carolyn.coulter@prairiecat.org

Phone number: 815-443-6016

Submission: Please email the report as an attachment to anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org.

1. Describe how RAILS grant funds were used. Attach any applicable supporting documents (such as LLSAP budget, memos, etc.) demonstrating the use of RAILS funds.

RAILS funds are leveraged in our budget as general revenue, and go towards the mission of PrairieCat by funding all aspects of our operations. This includes our software costs, member training, staffing and related expenses. I am attaching our FY25 budget, which shows the RAILS grant in our revenues, as well as our other sources of revenue and our expenses.

2. Please describe any significant LLSAP activities in the time period covered by the report, such as membership changes, new services or policies, ILS platform updates and changes, governance changes, etc.

In FY24, the Mills and Petrie Memorial Library opted to upgrade from Union Listing level to Basic Online. The library went live with circulation on 5/19/2025. We continue to visit potential members and respond to any inquiries that we receive.

PrairieCat upgrades our ILS software in tandem with Innovative's release schedule of Sierra, Vega and Encore. Currently, we are on the most recent version in general release of all software.

In FY25, PrairieCat continued our development partnership with Innovative to help develop their Vega software platform. In FY24, PrairieCat launched Innovative's new Vega Discovery software and we continue to work with Innovative to assist with developing more features for consortiums, such as added security and permissions. We are also working with Innovative to assist with development of their LX Starter product for consortiums, and hope to have that product operative in FY26. This module allows libraries to create modern email notices with add-value content.

In FY25, we moved our phone notifications system to the Innovative cloud, and removed the small server that was present in the Bolingbrook server room. In addition, we transferred the telecommunications necessary for the operation of this service to PrairieCat's account. We no longer have any telecommunications or equipment associated with this system in RAILS facilities.

We will still have our VPN device in the RAILS facility. We have one remaining server running one script we are having issues migrating to the cloud, but in short order everything else will be removed aside from the VPN.

Governance and policies remained much the same in FY25, with one major change. Upon examination of the OMA law, it was determined that PrairieCat exceeds the square mileage requirements for allowing in-person remote meeting locations (as RAILS allows). Therefore, bylaws changes were made to accommodate this. This was greeted with much applause by membership, who often have difficulties driving to one central location to meet at Delegates Assembly. We are hopeful that this change will alleviate problems for our membership as well as allow us to achieve quorum more easily.

3. If optional in-kind services are used, please list services and describe any significant activities related to them. If your needs regarding these services have changed or you anticipate them changing, please describe how. (In-kind services include datacenter, delivery services to LLSAP facility, financial services, help desk ticket system, use of RAILS facilities for LLSAP staff, consortium staffed by RAILS employees, use of RAILS vehicles, and ILS phone notification dialer co-location.)

We intend to continue with the use of RAILS financial services in the future, as long as they are affordable. We value these services highly and believe the skill sets that we are able to leverage with RAILS accountants are far better than what we could afford elsewhere.

We continue to leverage the Coal Valley and Bolingbrook facilities for minimal file and equipment storage (Coal Valley) and to pick up and drop off cataloging materials (Bolingbrook). In FY26, we will be moving a great deal of our archived files to Burr Ridge, as we complete digitization of our important IGAs and contracts. As the Coal Valley building is no longer monitored for fire alarms, we felt that moving the materials to a monitored facility was prudent, and we appreciate RAILS allowing us storage space at Burr Ridge for this.

We appreciate the flexibility that RAILS allows with these spaces. We do currently house one server at the Burr Ridge data center, which will be moved out this fiscal year. We will shortly have only a firewall device present in that facility.

4. For the RAILS services listed below, please indicate the ones in which any or all of your member libraries participate, and describe any significant activities, changes, or needs related to the services:

☒ eRead Illinois

In FY23, the consortium voted for membership for all circulating members of the consortium. In FY24, we renewed that agreement for three years. In FY26, we will address the next three years of participation.

☒ Find More Illinois

Some members are participants

☒ Explore More Illinois

Some members are participants

☒ Any other RAILS projects and group purchases that require ILS interoperability

It varies. Some members leverage RAILS group purchases for several services.

5. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns you would like to share with us? *(optional)*

RAILS LLSAP Support Grant: Annual Report

Due on July 31

LLSAP name: Cooperative Computer Services

Date of report: July 23, 2025

LLSAP staff member or representative preparing report

Name: Rebecca Malinowski

Title: Executive Director

Email: rmalinowski@ccslib.org

Phone number: 847-483-8604

Submission: Please email the report as an attachment to anne.slaughter@railslibraries.org.

1. Describe how RAILS grant funds were used. Attach any applicable supporting documents (such as LLSAP budget, memos, etc.) demonstrating the use of RAILS funds.

In fiscal year 2024-2025, CCS used grant funds to provide Find More Illinois to consortium members. All members except Mt. Prospect and Waukegan public libraries were live on Find More Illinois by the close of the fiscal year for a total cost of \$73,558. This is under our budgeted amount \$78,225. The grant funds allowed CCS to explore FMI membership at no additional cost to our members, which was a key factor in our decision to move forward with consortium-wide membership.

The bulk of the remainder of the grant funds were passed along to members to offset general membership costs (\$137,070, based on the budgeted FMI amount). CCS distributes the funds based on the RAILS support formula. Members receive their share of the Collection Expenditure Per Capita and Annual Fee as a Percent of Operating Expenditures components. All members share the ILL/RB component equally. This is the same model used last year.

The remaining \$4,667 has been invested in our Development Fund which will be used to fund new services in FY2025-2026 including advanced analytics and discovery tools for our members.

Attached: FY24-25 Budget, June 2025 Financial Report, Internal worksheet for rebates

2. Please describe any significant LLSAP activities in the time period covered by the report, such as membership changes, new services or policies, ILS platform updates and changes, governance changes, etc.

Membership changes: Mt. Prospect Public Library and Waukegan Public Library implementations were completed in October 2024. In November 2024, Vernon Area Public Library was approved as a new member and implementation has begun. VAPL will go live in September 2025.

Governance changes: CCS Governing Board approved a new strategic plan (see attached). The new plan calls for the development of a robust analytics service to enhance our existing report offerings.

Policy changes: CCS continues to update policies to comply with State and local regulations.

Platform: CCS is currently using Polaris version 7.7 with a planned upgrade to version 8.0 in FY25-26.

3. If optional in-kind services are used, please list services and describe any significant activities related to them. If your needs regarding these services have changed or you anticipate them changing, please describe how. (In-kind services include datacenter, delivery services to LLSAP facility, financial services, help desk ticket system, use of RAILS facilities for LLSAP staff, consortium staffed by RAILS employees, use of RAILS vehicles, and ILS phone notification dialer co-location.)

N/A

4. For the RAILS services listed below, please indicate the ones in which any or all of your member libraries participate, and describe any significant activities, changes, or needs related to the services:

☒ eRead Illinois

☒ Find More Illinois

CCS is continuing to assess the impact of FMI on patrons and staff and will present findings to Governing Board in November 2025.

☒ Explore More Illinois

☒ Any other RAILS projects and group purchases that require ILS interoperability

CCS uses L2 as an authentication source for ccslib.org and reports.ccslib.org.

5. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns you would like to share with us? *(optional)*