

DATE: May 15, 2026
TO: RAILS Board of Directors
FROM: Monica Harris, Executive Director
SUBJECT: FY2027 Operational Plan and Budget Overview

This memo provides a general overview of the proposed RAILS Operational Plan and Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2027. Enclosed in this packet is a rigorously detailed budget narrative prepared by RAILS Finance Director Sharon Swanson.

At our April meeting, I presented an overview of the initiatives included in the Draft Operational Plan for FY2027. These initiatives directly respond to member needs as detailed in our Strategic Plan, as well as our statutory purpose as described in the Illinois Library System Act. Our primary objective is to maintain an air of prudent fiscal management and structural sustainability while actively navigating the realities of rising operational costs under a level-funded state grant.

Revenue Projections

We extend our sincere thanks to Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias for the System Area and Per Capita Grant (SAPC) funding RAILS received in FY2026. On March 18, the Illinois State Library issued instructions for this year's grant application, which is due May 31, 2026. As shared in previous months, we are budgeting conservatively based on receiving level funding of \$11,871,714 from the SAPC grant.

As a reminder, our total revenue model includes an additional projected \$6.17 million. This is chiefly comprised of:

- **Reimbursement Revenue & Fees:** Over \$4.49 million from member library group purchases, e-rate, and fees for services and materials (including eRead Illinois and the Illinois Library Delivery Services [ILDS] contract).
- **Specialized Grant Funding:** Continuing grant funding of nearly \$669,000 from the Cook County Digital Equity Fund to lead the design and implementation of a Digital Navigator Network for suburban Cook County libraries. Continuing grant funding from the Illinois State Library of nearly \$189,000 to continue the development of L2 and the World Language Cataloging Services program.

- **Investment Income:** Approximately \$815,000. Following the Federal Reserve's April 29 meeting which kept interest rates level, we have budgeted an anticipated average interest yield of 2.9%. This represents the conservative low end of the projection range published by the Federal Reserve in March, resulting in a budgeted decrease in investment income compared to FY2026.

Expenditure Overview

In today's environment of persistent inflationary pressures, RAILS remains deeply committed to providing optimized services while maximizing value for our member libraries. This requires heightened prudence in budgetary planning, particularly regarding non-discretionary increases in personnel, utilities, fuel, health insurance, and facilities maintenance.

To maintain service levels and ensure long-term stability, our FY2027 expenditures are strictly prioritized across three core areas: Resource Sharing, Infrastructure and Facilities, and Personnel.

Due to these rising costs, the General fund is budgeted with a deliberate deficit of \$297,466. This deficit reflects a strategic decision to utilize reserves to fund essential services amid rising costs while prioritizing deferred capital needs. These planned capital expenditures are drawn from our Capital Projects Fund, directly aligning with the priorities identified in our comprehensive capital assessment plan to prudently maintain our facilities. Meanwhile, both our World Language Cataloging Services program and the ongoing development of L2 are expected to be fully funded through additional target grants from the Illinois State Library.

1. Resource Sharing

Resource sharing is our primary statutory directive under the Illinois Library System Act and remains the anchor of the RAILS Strategic Plan. We achieve this by supporting library consortia via LLSAP support grants, physical delivery services, continuing education, professional consulting, and statewide programs such as eRead Illinois, Explore More Illinois, and Find More Illinois.

- **Library Materials:** Expenditures will increase by 2.63% over the FY2026 budget. Deals and Discounts e-resources expenditures are offset by corresponding reimbursement revenue, reflecting growing member participation.
- **Fee Adjustments:** General fund fee revenue will decrease by \$120,431 for FY2027. This is primarily due to a one-time waiver of membership fees for K-12 eRead Illinois

members (\$148,000) following the FY2026 platform transition from Baker & Taylor's Boundless to Lyrasis' The Palace Project. This credit acknowledges and mitigates the impact of temporary access interruptions experienced by some K-12 partners.

2. Infrastructure and Facilities

- **Utilities & Operations:** Facilities expenditures are budgeted to increase by 2.70% due to rising energy, supply, and lease costs across our East Peoria, Rockford, and Bolingbrook facilities.
- **Insurance:** Liability insurance expenditures will see a slight overall decrease due to a lower-than-anticipated CY2026 renewal rate. However, this is partially offset by a 7% increase in commercial insurance costs, driven by nationwide trends in casualty losses, employment claims, digital accessibility compliance, and cyber liability.
- **Fleet & Fuel:** Fuel is budgeted conservatively at \$4.50 per gallon (up from the FY2026 baseline of \$3.14). However, because we have maintained a disciplined, regular vehicle replacement schedule since FY2024, our fleet's improved fuel economy allows us to lower our total fuel volume consumption estimate. Vehicle repair costs continue to decline, though part and labor inflation has moderated those savings. To maintain fleet integrity, eleven replacement delivery vehicles are budgeted at \$691,577.
- **Capital Maintenance:** In alignment with our capital assessment plan, targeted upgrades are scheduled across locations to ensure consistency and safety. These include carpet replacements (including \$12,000 at East Peoria). Major projects at Burr Ridge include a critical HVAC chiller replacement (\$200,000) and a server room reconfiguration (\$10,000).

3. Personnel

- **Wages and Market Adjustments:** The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the Chicago-Naperville-Elgin area released on May 12 indicated a 3.1% year-over-year increase (2.2% excluding food and energy). Accordingly, personnel projections reflect a 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Furthermore, HR Source recommended a 2.1% market adjustment to all pay grades for FY2027. An updated compensation structure reflecting this will be presented at the June board meeting.
- **Benefits & IMRF:** Healthcare costs continue to experience increases due to claims experience and high prescription medication costs, with an overall premium increase of

roughly 13.6% this year, alongside projected increases of 10% for dental and 2% for vision. Conversely, our preliminary employer rate from the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) increased only minutely to 0.82%. IMRF's long-term investment strategy and five-year smoothing mechanism continue to provide welcome stability despite recent market fluctuations.

- **Risk Management & Cost Controls:** To mitigate long-term liability and claims costs, RAILS has implemented background checks for all new hires and pre-employment physical examinations for positions with strenuous physical requirements. To help balance these compounding cost pressures, we will strategically pause our internship program for FY2027, with the intention of resuming it in future cycles.
- **Net Personnel Impact:** Overall, total personnel expenditures are budgeted to decrease by 3.64%. This reduction is primarily due to the structural transition of the Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA) to an independent employer model midway through 2026.

CONCLUSION:

This presentation of the FY2027 Budget and Operational Plan reflects an unwavering commitment to balancing high-quality member service with strict fiduciary responsibility. The plan prioritizes responsive, vital services aligned with our strategic goals while proactively defending our long-term fiscal sustainability. While this budget represents our best projections in a volatile economic climate, administration will continue to aggressively pursue internal efficiencies and cost controls throughout the fiscal year.

I look forward to a productive discussion and welcome your strategic feedback.

RAILS FY2027 System Area and Per Capita Grant Application

2.2 Detailed Budget Narrative

This budget narrative as a component of the Area and Per Capita (APC) grant application provides an overview and a programmatic analysis of the proposed budget that supports our fiscal year (FY) 2027 operational plan. Its purpose is to enhance understanding of the budget components and how the budget supports and aligns with our operational plan. All comparisons made to the prior year budget refer to the FY2026 budget. We have included an attachment showing line-item details of the FY2027 budget and FY2026 budget, with a breakdown by administration, delivery and LLSAP support revenues and expenditures, and a comparison of the two.

Inflation has continued to increase our costs since we received the additional APC grant funding from the Illinois Office of the Secretary of State during FY2023. As a result of these economic pressures, RAILS is presenting a deficit budget for FY2027. We expect to continue to experience increased expenses while working to enhance current services and pursue innovative programs and initiatives for our members in support of our operational plan that is based on our strategic plan:

- Keeping our salaries competitive and equitable while keeping our organizational structure sustainable given the ever-changing and increasing service needs of our member libraries
- Anticipating increased fuel costs that affect our own fuel costs as well as our delivery outsourcing contractor costs, and our fuel surcharge that we bill to the Consortium of Academic & Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI) for the Illinois Library Delivery Service (ILDS)
- Expecting increases in all insurance costs for calendar year 2027
- Offering grants for libraries that wish to join one of the six Local Library System Automation Programs (LLSAPs) that we support
- Supporting the growth and sustainability of our deals and discounts program to meet the ever-changing needs of our member libraries
- Purchasing eleven replacement delivery fleet vehicles to remain on a consistent replacement schedule for our fleet
- Replacing staff laptop docking stations across the organization
- Waiving eRead Illinois membership fees for K-12 school members for FY2027 due to interrupted access during FY2026

In addition, RAILS continues to support multiple statewide projects, including:

- Providing high-quality delivery services to CARLI members via (ILDS)
- Maintaining and developing the Library Learning (L2) website
- Leading and promoting the Find More Illinois (FMI) program
- Offering the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/Open Meetings Act (OMA) hotline
- Developing and promoting Inkie.org
- Leading the Explore More Illinois program
- Leading the eRead Illinois program
- Offering the world language cataloging services program

- Leading the SLATE project
- Offering the My Library Is grants
- Collaborating with partner organizations to plan networking opportunities, promote availability of statewide electronic resources package, plan Directors University, advocate for more certified school librarians, trustee training, fair e-resource pricing, and increased broadband access

In FY2027, RAILS is planning to continue to grow the deals and discounts program, the Find More Illinois program, and advocacy efforts for libraries to tell their stories. As in prior years, the Federal portion of our APC grant funds (\$1,951,654) will be used to support our delivery service to our members. A portion of these funds are used for our delivery staff salaries, and the remaining portion is used for our contractual agreement with our delivery outsourcing vendor who provides delivery services to a portion of our member libraries.

The FY2026 General Fund was budgeted to have a surplus of \$113,112. For FY2027, the General Fund is budgeted to have a deficit of \$297,466, and we have several FY2027 purchases planned from our Capital Projects Fund (\$913,577) which brings our total FY2027 budget to a \$1,211,043 deficit. The FY2027 budget incorporates several continuing projects from FY2026 at the current level of need as well as several new projects based on member feedback and needs. Both the world language cataloging services program as well as the maintenance and development of L2 are expected to be funded through separate grants from the Illinois State Library (ISL). The budget that we are presenting includes all the services that RAILS believes we should be providing to our members to meet the operational plan and our strategic plan goals while keeping RAILS' current services for our member libraries sustainable for the long term.

The FY2027 budget reflects the full transition of the Resource Sharing Alliance (RSA) staff from being employed by RAILS to being employed directly by RSA.

RAILS deferred vehicle purchases for several years due to market shortages, but beginning in FY2024, RAILS has been able to consistently maintain a regular replacement schedule for our fleet. To continue our regular replacement schedule for our fleet, RAILS plans to purchase eleven replacement delivery vehicles during FY2027.

Summary

The proposed FY2027 operational plan continues its support of programs and activities included in the RAILS operational plan guided by the RAILS Strategic Plan approved by the RAILS Board in January 2022. Major activities include:

- Support for libraries to join LLSAPs
- System delivery and ILDS
- Find More Illinois
- Maintenance and continued development of L2
- Continuing education and training for members, including public library trustees
- Data collection for deals & discounts, delivery, LLSAPs, schools, etc.
- eRead Illinois
- Explore More Illinois
- Deals and discounts
- Grants to help show the value of libraries through the My Library Is program

RAILS FY2027 System Area and Per Capita Grant Application | May 31, 2026

- World language cataloging services and cataloging training for member library staff
- Advocacy around emerging issues for member libraries, resources, and library systems

As in past years, we used zero-based budgeting, meaning we developed the FY2027 budget from the ground up. We included all activities that we believe are necessary to support our operational and strategic plans.

Revenues

General Fund revenues of \$17,179,528 are budgeted to increase \$150,373 from the FY2026 budget. This increase is primarily due to the increases in reimbursements (\$337,000), partially offset by decreases in fees for services and materials (\$120,431), investment income (\$62,000), and other revenue (\$4,196).

Special Revenue Fund activity continues to be budgeted for FY2027, including the continuing grant from the Cook County Digital Equity Fund that RAILS was awarded in May 2025. Work on this grant will be wrapped up by the end of November 2026 with the total expected activity during FY2027 to be \$668,937. In addition, RAILS will be submitting applications for two technology grants from the Illinois State Library for the continued development and maintenance of L2 (\$85,066) as well as the world language cataloging services program (\$103,735).

Expenditures

Budgeted general fund expenditures of \$17,476,994 are \$560,951 above the FY2026 budgeted amounts. Expenditure categories that are expected to grow from the prior year are contractual services (\$802,330); vehicle expenses (\$112,005); library materials (\$89,375); and buildings and grounds (\$18,751). Major expenditure categories that are expected to decrease are personnel (\$286,154); supplies, postage, and printing (\$90,193); professional services (\$50,347); telephone and telecom expenses (\$20,733); and travel and continuing education (\$10,874).

For the General Fund, we are budgeting total estimated expenditures exceeding estimated revenues by \$297,466. Special Revenue Fund revenues offset expenditures for the three programs that are budgeted. We are budgeting \$913,577 of expenditures from the Capital Projects Fund, which has no budgeted revenues. As in FY2026, we have budgeted Area and Per Capita grant revenues of \$11,871,714, which includes \$1,951,654 from the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). FY2027 will be the sixth year of our world language cataloging services program and our continued maintenance and development of the L2 platform that supports the statewide directory of libraries and library learning events in Illinois.

Revenue Details

FY2027 estimated total revenues of \$18,037,266 consist of General Fund and Special Revenue Fund revenues.

APC grant revenues (\$11,871,714) are budgeted at the FY2026 award amount. The APC grant amount accounts for 69.10% of the General Fund revenue budget. Excluding reimbursement revenues, the percentage increases to 84.58%.

General Fund fees for services and materials of \$1,332,916 are budgeted to decrease \$120,431 from the FY2026 budget primarily due to the waiving of membership fees for the K-12 eRead Illinois members (\$148,000) for FY2027 due to the FY2026 transition from Baker & Taylor's Boundless platform to Lyris's The Palace Project platform resulting in interruptions in access for some K-12 member libraries. The discounted HR Source membership participation is anticipated to decrease (\$1,550) due to member libraries growing out of participation eligibility criteria. These decreases are partially offset by the contractual 4% increase in ILDS contract fees and expected fuel surcharges for statewide delivery (\$30,466). Fees included in the budget are:

- ILDS contract fees for statewide delivery to academic institutions (\$808,826), billed to offset personnel, contractual services, and overhead costs that are devoted to providing this service
- eRead Illinois membership fees (\$340,000), which directly support purchases of content for the program
- FMI membership fees (\$160,000), which partially offset program costs and help to ensure the sustainability of the program
- Discounted HR Source membership for participating libraries (\$23,250), billed on a sliding scale that partially offset RAILS' expenditures
- CE lunch fees for in-person library continuing education events (\$840) to offset RAILS catering costs

General Fund reimbursements of \$3,143,750 are budgeted to increase \$337,000 from the FY2026 budget. RAILS's database offerings to complement and enhance the Statewide Database Package are anticipated to increase \$200,000 from participation levels in FY2026. The rest of the deals and discounts program also continues to see expansion. Significant increases include an additional \$45,000 in subscriptions for Press Reader as well as two new products - Blinkist \$15,000 and Playgarden Online (\$10,000). To address member needs and requests that arise during the fiscal year, we are budgeting a provision of \$100,000. The major deals and discounts budgeted for FY2027 are the EBSCO databases (\$900,000), Communico Cloud (\$500,000), several Gale products (\$351,000), Press Reader (\$275,000), Brainfuse (\$250,000), SWANK (\$215,000), CreativeBug (\$110,000), and JSTOR (\$100,000). Amounts budgeted as reimbursement revenues are beneficial to RAILS' members as they provide economies of scale for collaborative purchasing initiatives to help scarce member library dollars stretch as far as possible and to increase resource sharing. These revenues have no impact upon fund balances as they offset corresponding library materials expenditures.

Investment income of \$815,000 is budgeted for FY2027, a decrease of \$62,000 from the \$877,000 budgeted for the prior year. Interest rates are projected to decrease in the next calendar year with the central tendency of the Federal Reserve's projections at their March 2026 meeting ranging between 3.1% and 3.6% for CY2026 and 2.9% and 3.6% for CY2027. To remain conservative, RAILS is projecting average interest rate at 2.9% for the entirety of FY2027. The total projected interest income also incorporates the advantageous rates that we have locked in with our series of laddered investments. These projections assume that we will continue to receive APC funding in the same pattern as FY2026.

Prairie Area Library System (PALS), one of our predecessor systems, was the recipient of a donation of a tract of land adjacent to our facility. This land has a billboard, and PALS was able to establish an agreement with an advertising company that has been maintained by RAILS. RAILS expects to receive \$1,000 in rental income for the use of the sign which reimburses RAILS for the cost of maintaining the lawn and paying property taxes on this tract of land.

RAILS FY2027 System Area and Per Capita Grant Application | May 31, 2026

We continue to retain an outside consultant to continue our e-rate filings. We anticipate the receipt of \$13,748 of reimbursements for our internet services in FY2027.

Other revenues are budgeted at \$1,400, which decreased \$3,600 from the FY2026 budget. These are primarily amounts received as credit card cash back rebates as well as sales of Illinois Library Law books that RAILS purchases at the ILA member rate and delivers to our member libraries. RAILS receives cashback rebates equivalent to 1% of purchases made using our organization credit cards. Member library book purchases are budgeted to be minimal in FY2027, since the last edition was published in January 2024 and purchases have dropped off.

Expenditure Details

Personnel

General Fund personnel-related expenditures of \$7,577,810 are budgeted to decrease \$286,154, or 3.64%, from the prior year budget. Personnel-related expenditures are budgeted to account for 43.37% of total general fund expenditures, compared to 46.49% in the FY2026 budget, comprising the largest single category of RAILS expenditures. The FY2027 budget for salary expenditures incorporates the following highlights and assumptions:

- The full-year transition of the ten positions that served RSA to direct employment with RSA as of January 1, 2026, is reflected in the FY2027 budget. The impact of this transition is a \$458,075 decrease in salary and salary-related expenditures.
- The pausing of the intern program for FY2027. The impact of this change from FY2026 is \$17,198.
- A system-wide 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase has been included to keep pace with Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases and remain competitive. The total impact of this 3% increase is approximately \$204,704, including salaries and benefits for existing staff and turnover that occurred during FY2026.
- The budget incorporates the FY2026 conversion of the Special Projects Librarian position from part-time to full-time to support the growth in the Explore More Illinois program as well as the changes in the eRead Illinois program. The impact of this change is a \$51,783 increase, including benefits.
- The budget incorporates an overall 13.60% anticipated increase in health insurance costs for the second half of FY2027, including the most recent open enrollment elections and a full year of RSA staff independence. The impact of these changes was a \$43,639 increase.
- With the continued and increased demand for the world language cataloging program, the budget also incorporates the continuation of a temporary part-time cataloging services assistant position. The impact of continuing this position is \$29,575, including salary and salary-related expenditures. This position is budgeted in the Special Revenue Fund with the anticipation that it will be covered by the world language cataloging services grant from the Illinois State Library.
- The budget also incorporates adjustments for three existing positions to bring them into alignment for equity within the established pay scale. The impact of these changes is a \$20,123 increase, including salary and salary-related expenditures.
- The budget incorporates a salary adjustment for another position that was benchmarked after significant changes to core job responsibilities. The impact of this change was approximately a \$10,607 increase, including salary and salary-related expenditures.

General Fund salary expenditures of \$5,787,790 are budgeted to decrease \$245,197, or 4.06%, from the prior year budget. LLSAP salaries are anticipated to decrease \$373,774 due to the RSA staff being hired directly by RSA as of January 1, 2026. This decrease is partially offset by an increase in administrative salaries (\$101,972) and delivery salaries (\$26,605).

The budget for social security taxes (\$441,755) decreased \$18,904, or 4.10%, which corresponds to the decrease in budgeted salaries. Unemployment insurance (\$37,130) is budgeted to increase \$548, or 1.50%, due to the rate increase in CY2026 and another expected increase in CY2027. Since the rate is based on the last three years' experience and does include an experience factor for the state of Illinois, it can have large fluctuations. Given the current uncertainty around inflation and the job market, this anticipated increase allows for wider statewide fluctuations that could occur during the second half of CY2026. Worker's compensation expenditures (\$89,519) are budgeted to decrease \$67,906, or 43.14%, due to the results of the last insurance renewal which included several credits and lower rates as well as the independence of the RSA staff. These increases are partially offset by increase in budgeted salaries and an overall expected 7% increase in rates.

Retirement benefits (\$46,191) are budgeted to decrease \$734, or 1.56% from the FY2026 budget due to the independence of the RSA staff and delivery staff turnover, partially offset by a slight increase in the employer contribution rate from .79% for CY2026 to .82% for CY2027. RAILS pension obligations are funded in excess of 100%, resulting in low funding obligations for FY2027 and FY2026. RAILS anticipates decreases in our employer reserve that will affect FY2028, primarily around fluctuations in investment markets that will affect IMRF's investment earnings. IMRF smooths investment earnings fluctuations over five years to keep rates more predictable for employers. RAILS' funding percentage increased from 112.47% to 118.39% from the end of calendar year 2024 to calendar year 2025.

Health, dental, and life insurance expenditures of \$1,085,725 are budgeted to increase \$43,639, or 4.19% from the FY2026 budget due to an anticipated 13.60% increase in health insurance premiums for the second half of the year, a 10% increase in dental premiums, and a 2% increase in vision premiums. The health, dental and life insurance budget is constructed on a departmental and location basis based on the current staff elections and adjusted for future cost increases. RAILS is continuing the health reimbursement account (HRA) program, which was first implemented in FY2017, in which employees participate in a higher deductible (\$2,000) PPO program, but retain the low deductible (\$500) benefit.

Other fringe benefits of \$29,700 are budgeted to increase \$1,900. This account includes provisions to reimburse employees for additional deductible expenses incurred under the HRA program (\$4,400), the health savings account (HSA) program (\$14,000), the staff tuition assistance program (\$10,000), and various administrative fees.

The FY2027 budget of \$45,000 for temporary help, all of which is budgeted for the delivery department, remains level with the FY2026 budget. Recruiting expenditures of \$15,000 are budgeted to increase \$500 from the FY2026 budget primarily due to the implementation of physical exams for new hires who will hold positions with physical requirements as well as greater than anticipated job advertisement costs.

Collectively, FY2027 General Fund personnel expenditures are budgeted to decrease \$286,154, or 3.64% from the FY2026 budget. This decrease is due primarily to the RSA staff independence partially offset by the 3% COLA increases and anticipated increases in health, dental and vision costs.

Library Materials

Library materials expenditures (\$3,493,350) are budgeted to increase \$89,375, or 2.63% from the FY2026 budget. Deals and discounts E-resources expenditures of \$3,143,750 are budgeted, compared to \$2,806,750 budgeted for FY2026. These expenditures are offset by reimbursement revenues and will have no impact on fund balances. In addition, the budget provides that RAILS will use the proceeds of its eRead Illinois membership fees (\$340,000), \$148,000 below the FY2026 budget, to purchase e-books for the eRead Illinois shared collection. Finally, the budget provides for the purchase (\$7,000) of the Public Web Browser for member libraries. The Public Web Browser purchases will be provided at no cost to the membership. Lastly, we are budgeting for the purchase of a subscription for the RDA Toolkit (\$1,000) which is used by a RAILS staff member to provide cataloging training to member library staff.

Buildings and Grounds

Total buildings and grounds expenditures of \$714,388 are budgeted to increase \$18,751, or 2.70% from the FY2026 budget primarily due to increases in custodial/janitorial services and supplies, utility costs, and the increases built into the leases for the East Peoria, Rockford, and Bolingbrook facilities.

Utilities are budgeted to increase \$6,847 due primarily to an increase from \$.06326 per kwh to \$.08165 per kwh in the new three-year fixed rate energy agreement negotiated by the Northern Illinois Municipal Electric Collaborative (NIMEC). This new agreement ends May 2029. We are anticipating a slightly milder upcoming winter, and we now have data to determine a more precise estimate of the utility needs for the increased sorting space in Bolingbrook.

Property insurance increased \$722 primarily due to an expected 7% increase in rates due to nationwide casualty losses coupled with a much more favorable insurance renewal than we had anticipated for CY2026.

Repairs and maintenance are expected to decrease \$5,509 primarily due to the FY2026 Burr Ridge office signage project partially offset by increased vendor costs for lawn maintenance, snow removal, and facility repairs. Additionally, we are planning for tuckpointing in FY2027 to properly maintain the Coal Valley facility per the facilities assessment that we had performed during FY2026.

Custodial/janitorial services and supplies increased \$11,239 primarily due to increased cleaning needs for the Bolingbrook sorting area to keep dust at a minimum as well as increases in labor and supplies costs from our vendors.

Other buildings and grounds expenses are expected to increase \$1,960 primarily due to increased vendor costs as well as additional inspection and license costs for our increases sorting operation at our Bolingbrook facility.

Vehicle Expenditures

Total vehicle expenditures of \$675,908 are budgeted to increase \$112,005, or 19.86% from the FY2026 budget, primarily from increases in fuel (\$110,983), insurance (\$11,122), and other vehicle expenditures (\$4,100), partially offset by decreased vehicle repairs and maintenance (\$14,200).

The FY2026 budget assumes fuel prices increasing from \$3.14 per gallon to \$4.50 per gallon with a 2,000 gallon decrease in overall fuel usage. Due to the conflict in the Middle East that is affecting the Strait of Hormuz, fuel prices have dramatically increased since the end of February 2026. The average fuel price as of the beginning of May 2026 has risen to \$4.46 per gallon from an average price of \$2.63 in February

2026. By continuing to stay on a regular replacement schedule for our fleet, we are experiencing better fuel economy, allowing us to lower the fuel usage estimate from 87,000 gallons in FY2026 to 85,000 gallons for FY2027.

Vehicle repairs and maintenance are anticipated to decrease \$14,200 in FY2027 due to the continued regular replacement of RAILS's delivery fleet.

The FY2027 vehicle insurance expenditures (\$202,658) are budgeted to increase \$11,122 due to an anticipated 7% premium increase, partially offset by a more favorable than anticipated CY2026 insurance renewal.

Other vehicle expenditures (\$12,100) are expected to increase (\$4,100) due to the purchase of eleven replacement vehicles that will need to be RAILS-branded during FY2027.

Travel, Meetings and Continuing Education

Total expenditures of \$380,278 for this category are budgeted to decrease \$10,874, or 2.78%.

In-state and out-of-state travel expenditures decreased \$343 and increased \$8,974, respectively from the FY2026 budget. FY2027 budgeted in-state travel expenditures decreased slightly due to the ALA conference being held in New Orleans instead of Chicago as well as the AISLE conference being held in Lombard instead of Champaign. FY2027 budgeted out-of-state travel expenditures increased due to the New Orleans location of the ALA conference as well as the planned attendance of an additional RAILS staff member at the National Library Legislative Day event in Washington, D.C. and an additional library resources staff member attending the Charleston Library conference.

Registrations and meetings (\$107,860) expenditures are budgeted to decrease \$4,805 from the FY2026 budget. These expenditures primarily include registration fees and sponsorships, if applicable, for all conferences and courses as well as various board meeting and hospitality expenditures. These expenditures decreased from the prior year budget primarily due to PLA being a biannual event that was last held in FY2026. As in FY2026, we also included a small but slightly increased amount for celebration of staff milestone events, including retirements for staff at all our service centers.

The FY2027 continuing education budget of \$119,100 is budgeted to decrease \$14,700 from the FY2026 budget. These funds are used to provide continuing education (CE) and consulting on the topics of library advocacy; management and practice; interlibrary loan (ILL) and the ILLINET Interlibrary Loan Code; the RAILS Resource Sharing Policy; issues and challenges; nonresident services; per capita grant requirements and standards; strategic planning; and many other topics. The program primarily relies on outside, paid trainers and consulting sources to satisfy these needs. Costs include speaker fees and travel, facility, hospitality, and other associated costs. These funds are also used to cover several subscriptions that provide learning and growth for our member libraries. After tracking the usage of the Freedom Lifted subscription over the past several years, we determined in FY2027 that these funds would better serve our members by discontinuing this subscription and focusing on continuing to offer EDI-focused CE events that reach more RAILS members. FY2027 is the second year of Niche Academy. The budget provides for continuing education in the following categories:

- General — \$51,500 — Continued offerings of workshops, webinars, HR Source, and other events
- Niche Academy learning platform — \$36,100 — Learning platform for RAILS members

- CE event grants — \$16,000 — Continuing to support library leadership and EDI
- Leadership cohort developmental work – \$15,000 – Developing opportunities for libraries to grow and develop in their leadership
- Directors University scholarships – \$500 – Assistance for member libraries with demonstrated need to cover their registration fees to attend Directors University

Public Relations

Public Relations expenditures of \$25,850 are budgeted to decrease \$3,050 from the FY2026 budget due primarily to the FY2026 completion of the larger eRead Illinois promotional material printing project. This expenditure line includes \$12,100 for RAILS branded conference promotional materials, \$5,000 for the Remo platform for the Illinois School Library Workers Symposium, \$4,000 for eRead Illinois and Find More Illinois materials printing, \$3,000 for postcards and mailings for library data collections and RAILS board election, \$1,500 for the platform for a deals and discounts virtual vendor day event, as well as \$250 for custom printed conference booth supplies. RAILS is applying for a grant to cover the costs of the Remo platform as we have done in prior years, but we are presenting the full costs if the grant is not awarded to us.

Liability Insurance

Liability insurance expenditures of \$54,592 are budgeted to decrease \$1,392 from the FY2026 budget, primarily from a less than anticipated CY2026 renewal increase. This is partially offset by an anticipated 7% increase in CY2027 rates due to nationwide loss exposure from employment claims, cyber liability claims, weather-related claims, and claims for digital accessibility.

Supplies, Postage and Printing

Total expenditures of \$247,081 for this category are budgeted to decrease \$90,193 from the FY2026 budget, primarily from a \$96,940 decrease in computers, software, and supplies. This decrease is primarily due to the FY2026 completion of the staff computer replacement project (\$100,000). Additional decreased costs include a continued investigation of the transition to cloud-based hosting for RAILS websites with a transition planned at a future time as well as less than anticipated Microsoft Office 365 subscription costs. These decreases are partially offset by normal increases in subscription costs and the purchase of additional licenses for Microsoft Copilot for staff use (\$4,752).

General office supplies expenditures decreased \$9,766 due primarily to the FY2026 completion of the directional signage project at the Burr Ridge office. FY2026 included an allowance for updated resource sharing map printing through an outside vendor. This work was accomplished in-house by the RAILS data team who created a searchable and dynamic resource sharing map that is being used for library advocacy throughout the state. The FY2027 budget for general office supplies includes \$20,000 for replacement office furniture purchases for Burr Ridge to be used as staff needs arise.

Postage costs continue to increase, and, during FY2026, RAILS replaced the postage meter at Burr Ridge to remain compliant with USPS standards. This replacement did result in an increase in maintenance costs.

Delivery supplies expenditures of \$67,043 increased \$14,343 due primarily to the need to increase delivery label orders from five million per year to six million per year. For the past two fiscal years, RAILS has needed to issue an advance release of our orders to accommodate increase in member library needs.

Telephone and Telecommunications

FY2027 budgeted expenditures of \$56,972 are budgeted to decrease \$20,733 due to cost savings achieved through the combining of the internet line and bandwidth services for Burr Ridge and Bolingbrook under one provider. Additionally, our GPS tracking services were moved to a new vendor during FY2026, resulting in significant overall savings and better data reliability. Lastly, our cellular services were reviewed and pricing was renegotiated.

Equipment Rental, Repair & Maintenance

Total expenditures of \$128,738 for this category are budgeted to decrease \$761 from the FY2026 budget, primarily due to decreased equipment repair and maintenance agreements. The budget includes existing contracts for HVAC maintenance, generator maintenance, copier equipment, and annual maintenance expenditures on various equipment and software, including Zoom. This decrease is primarily due to the removal of ten licenses from Zoom web conference partially offset by the addition of Zoom video to our overall subscription.

Professional Services

Total expenditures of \$221,717 for this category are budgeted to decrease \$50,347 from the FY2026 budget, primarily from a \$36,750 decrease in consulting expenditures. This was primarily due to not anticipating any consulting work for the FMI program during FY2027 (\$10,000), the reduction of the budget for captioning work to match actual expenditures (reduced from \$15,000 to \$5,000 in FY2027), and the completion of the FMI logo redesign in FY2026 (\$6,000). Consulting expenditures include a provision for strategic planning (\$20,000), consulting for best practices for AI (\$10,000), EDI consulting for staff (\$10,000), advocacy consulting for our member libraries (\$10,000), and live human captioning services for increased accessibility (\$5,000).

FY2027 budgeted consulting expenditures of \$120,450 consist of:

- HR Source discounted membership program - \$47,250
- Strategic planning - \$20,000
- FOIA/OMA hotline - \$12,000
- Best Practices for AI - \$10,000
- EDI consulting - \$10,000
- Advocacy consulting \$10,000
- Live human captioning services - \$5,000
- Structural engineering services for Coal Valley facility - \$3,000
- e-Rate Consulting - \$2,200
- Digital accessibility consulting - \$500
- Translation services - \$500

We are continuing to develop contracts with consultants in a variety of areas for which libraries and RAILS have needs. These needs and priorities change from year to year, as will the amounts that we have budgeted. We have not hired permanent staff to provide consulting services, as that service model limits our ability to respond to changing financial conditions and the needs of members. The HR Source membership program is partially reimbursed by fees that are billed on a sliding scale to participating libraries.

Legal fees of \$35,000 are budgeted to decrease \$15,000 due primarily to the completion of the collective bargaining renegotiation process during FY2026 for a small number of covered staff.

Accounting fees are budgeted to increase \$1,403 from FY2026 due primarily to the annual increase in payroll processing costs as well as a small annual increase for the second year of our five-year audit agreement.

Contractual Services

Total expenditures of \$3,871,027 for this category are budgeted to increase \$802,330 from the FY2026 budget, due primarily due to an increase in contractual agreements with systems, member libraries and other cooperatives (\$495,146), other contractual services (\$297,423), as well as an increase in information service costs (\$9,761).

The FY2027 budget for agreements with systems, member libraries, and other cooperatives expenditures (\$2,218,995) is \$495,146 above the FY2026 budget primarily due to increases in LLSAP support (\$492,840) and administration expenditures (\$2,306). LLSAP direct support expenditures increased \$492,840 from the FY2026 budget, as RSA directly hired the former RAILS staff members who supported their operations as of January 1, 2026. With this transition, vehicle expenses and travel costs were transitioned to RSA, and, during FY2027, information technology expenses and support will also transition to RSA. These costs were deducted from their support grant payments, so this change reflects a shifting of these costs between budget lines. RAILS intends to continue its support payments to six entities in FY2027, three of which (CCS, Rock River, and Pinnacle) were added in FY2020. The FY2027 and FY2026 support payments are shown below:

	<u>FY 2027</u>		<u>FY 2026</u>
CCS	\$ 215,563	\$	223,995
Pinnacle	54,323		56,527
PrairieCat	534,487		527,062
RRLC	75,776		71,504
RSA	702,118		224,713
SWAN	515,768		501,394
Total Direct LLSAP Support	\$ 2,098,035	\$	1,605,195

The FY2027 total support allocations to PrairieCat and RSA, both of which receive varying levels of in-kind support from RAILS in addition to the monetary awards above, are \$588,630 and \$799,940, respectively.

Contractual agreements for administration increased \$2,306 primarily due to increases in the indirect costs recorded in the General Fund for the three grants budgeted in the Special Revenue Fund. These costs include RAILS staff member time, travel, and other overhead costs. This is partially offset by a decrease in cataloging membership grant needs from \$150,000 in FY2026 to \$83,000 in FY2027. These grants are budgeted based on expressed interest and anticipated needs.

Other contractual services expenditures of \$1,600,205 are expected to increase \$297,423 primarily due to a \$162,323 increase in the budgeted delivery services contract with CTL. This includes the contractual 5% increase in CTL’s delivery services fees as well as the anticipated fuel price increase from an average of \$3.14 per gallon to \$5.00 per gallon at the non-tax-exempt rate. This shift in fuel prices sets the average

fuel surcharge from CTL at 12%. Additional increases of \$135,100 are due to the addition of the eRead Illinois platform fee (\$105,000) as well as the second payment for the perpetual licenses for high-demand Illinois history titles (\$50,000).

The FY2027 other contractual services budget provides for administration expenditures of \$525,600, an increase of \$135,100 from the FY2026 budget. These expenditures include:

- Find More Illinois platform expenditures of \$140,000
- eRead Illinois platform expenditures of \$105,000
- BiblioLabs platform expenditures of \$70,000 to support the statewide Inkie.org program which promotes local self-published author materials
- Explore More Illinois platform expenditures of \$70,000 to support and expand the program, which connects library patrons to deals and discounts from museums and other cultural attractions
- Perpetual licensing second installment costs for Illinois history titles of \$50,000 to save on long-term costs
- Consortia Manager expenditures of \$35,000 to provide an infrastructure for managing member library deals and discounts while allowing for the expansion and increased efficiency of the program
- A provision of \$25,000, which is RAILS' investment to continue and encourage participation in the Smart Horizons Career Online High School group purchase offer
- A provision of \$25,000, which is RAILS' investment to encourage adoption of the Gale Excel high school group purchase offer
- Backstage Library Works expenditures of \$5,000 for the bibliographic MARC records processing for eRead Illinois
- A provision of \$600 for potential records shredding in compliance with our Illinois State approved records retention plan

Information services costs increased (\$9,761) primarily due to additional costs to upgrade our email lists for members for security and sustainability. This upgrade includes \$4,692 in one-time costs and an increase in annual costs of approximately \$3,500.

Professional Association Membership Dues

Total expenditures of \$14,798 for this category are budgeted to increase \$2,459 from the FY2026 budget, due primarily to the addition of an organizational membership for the Government Management Information Sciences International as well as the Government Finance Officers Association. In addition, RAILS's organization membership costs for ALA are expected to increase.

Miscellaneous

Total expenditures of \$14,485 for this category are budgeted to decrease \$465 from the FY2026 budget. This decrease is due to decreased minor expenses for administration and delivery partially offset by the anticipated expense to replenish check stock supplies during FY2027. This account is used for bank fees, credit card fees, and other minor expenses.

Special Revenue Fund Grant Expenditures

Expenditures of \$857,738 are budgeted for FY2027 and are anticipated to be completely offset by grant revenues.

RAILS was awarded \$850,000 from the Cook County Digital Equity Fund to establish a digital navigator network in libraries within suburban Cook County. Of this total amount, \$668,937 of the grant activity is budgeted to occur between July and November of 2026. The bulk of this amount (\$570,500) will be distributed to all eligible suburban Cook County libraries in July 2026 as sub-grants. RAILS will continue to work with the outside consultant for planning and outreach (\$36,000), and the remaining amount of the grant (\$62,437) will be used to cover RAILS staff time spent administering, developing, evaluating, and managing the project including expected staff travel and other costs for administering the grant.

FY2027 is the sixth year of both the world language cataloging services and the continuing maintenance and development of L2 grants. As in prior years, RAILS has applied for funding to support both services, and we anticipate receiving a funding decision shortly after the start of FY2027.

Total expenditures for the world language cataloging services program (\$103,735) include a portion of the Cataloging Services Manager's time spent on the project (\$24,280) as well as a temporary part-time Cataloging Services Assistant position (\$29,575). Additional expenditures for this grant include cataloging fees for the third-party cataloging service that catalogs items that cannot be translated in-house (\$40,000), an amount for travel for a potential program at the ILA Reaching Forward North conference (\$350), a small allowance for supplies (\$100), and indirect costs for administering the program (\$9,430).

Total expenditures for the continuing maintenance and development of L2 (\$85,066) include a portion of the Applications and Web Developer's time spent on the project (\$10,700) as well as a portion of the Application Developer's time (\$6,960). Additional expenditures include maintenance and development to be provided by the vendor that built L2 (\$59,673) and indirect costs for administering the project (\$7,733).

Capital Outlays

Expenditures of \$913,577 are budgeted \$214,577 above the FY2026 budget.

RAILS had a building assessment performed for the Burr Ridge facility in FY2025. These upcoming maintenance projects were incorporated into the FY2026 budget, and the following amounts are being carried forward to the FY2027 budget:

- Chiller replacement at a cost of \$200,000
- Server room reconfiguration at a cost of \$10,000

In addition to these items for Burr Ridge, a provision of \$12,000 is also included to replace the well-worn carpet in the East Peoria facility.

The FY2027 budget also includes eleven replacement vehicles for delivery at a total cost of \$691,577. With these planned purchases, we are continuing to remain on a regular replacement schedule for our fleet.

Conclusion

General Fund revenues of \$17,179,528 are budgeted to increase \$150,373 from the FY2026 budget, primarily due to increases in reimbursements partially offset by decreases in fees for services and materials and investment income.

Budgeted General Fund expenditures of \$17,476,994 are \$560,951 above the FY2026 budgeted amounts. Higher than prior year's expenditures are budgeted in contractual services; vehicle expenses; library materials; and buildings and grounds. Budgeted expenditures decreased overall in nearly all other categories, with the largest decreases in personnel; supplies, postage, and printing; professional services; telephone and telecom expenses; and travel and continuing education.

For the General Fund, we are budgeting total estimated expenditures exceeding estimated revenues by \$297,466. We are also budgeting \$913,577 of expenditures from the Capital Projects Fund, which has no budgeted revenues.

The budget and operational plan are based on level APC funding of \$11,871,714, but we are mindful that the effects of inflation have caused sustained increased costs, resulting in a deficit budget for FY2027. We are requesting additional funding of \$103,735 to support the world language cataloging services and additional funding of \$85,066 to support the continued maintenance and development of L2. RAILS was previously awarded a grant from the Cook County Digital Equity Fund in the amount of \$850,000. We anticipate that \$668,937 of the work for this grant will be completed during FY2027. The budget we are presenting includes the services that RAILS believes we should be providing for our members.

This is both a forward-looking and thoughtful budget that will enable RAILS to work toward meeting the goals in its strategic plan and the activities identified by the Illinois State Library.

RAILS FY 2027 System Area and Per Capita Grant Application

3.0 System Operational Plan

The Reaching Across Illinois Library System’s (RAILS) operational plan for FY 2027 is rooted in the assumption that all libraries will continue to benefit from our collective strength.

When we say “thriving libraries are essential to all who learn, live, or work in Illinois,” we mean that libraries find meaningful connections to people’s lives. The primary way that we can accomplish this is by making libraries more connected to their communities.

In the plan below, you will find many examples of RAILS staff going above and beyond to bring libraries together. Some notable examples:

- Finding new ways to expand usage and integrate libraries into The Palace Project program after the transition from Baker & Taylor’s Boundless product
- The continuation of a partnership with Cook County that will bring \$850k to public libraries for digital equity
- Working directly with members to expand deals & discount offerings
- Growing the Find More Illinois program which makes interlibrary loan faster and easier
- Creating new advocacy efforts to help libraries tell their story
- Continuing to build new ways for libraries to learn and grow as leaders
- Expanding libraries’ comfort with data and providing leadership around data storytelling

Member libraries require us to lead regional coordination and facilitate collaboration. We drive progress by bringing members together, while ensuring our work stays aligned with their local priorities through consistent feedback.

One important note about FY2027: we are currently under way with a strategic plan revision. Although we will likely keep the same strategic goals in place, we will be seeking member input into new objectives. Our goal is to have a new plan approved by the RAILS Board in November 2026 for calendar years 2027-2029.

With a new plan in place and the momentum we already have, we are confident that RAILS will continue to help libraries to thrive.

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	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.	23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
<p>communications between all types of libraries.</p>	<p>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), Association for Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) Midwest Chapter and others to plan networking opportunities for staff at different levels from different types of libraries and for public library trustees.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Assist in the formation of new RAILS networking groups as needed.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Continue to offer to academic & school mixer program to encourage cross-library collaboration.</p> <p>Continue with plans to offer member groups the opportunity to meet in person at RAILS service centers as possible.</p> <p>Encourage use of RAILS mailing lists, including lists geared toward different library types and sizes, and staff at all levels.</p> <p>Establish new mailing lists as needed. Sunset lists that aren't being used.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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 and continue to develop new channels to help ensure that members know about specific, relevant offers available.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6) 23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>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.</p> <p>Work with statewide partners – including those at the Secretary of State’s Office/Illinois State Library - to promote availability of the statewide electronic resources package.</p> <p>Continue to streamline and develop processes, including the comprehensive Consortia Manager platform, to manage RAILS group purchases and discounts.</p> <p>Develop standards and metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of the Deals & Discounts program. Widely publicize member savings to demonstrate the program’s impact.</p> <p>Continue to negotiate, explore and build partnership approaches to maximize savings for members.</p> <p>Network with group purchasing managers in Illinois and nationwide to share knowledge, explore new opportunities and develop best practices.</p> <p>Continue to engage and inform members about deals & discounts through new email lists created specifically for staff from libraries that handle purchasing.</p> <p>Continue to work with member advisory groups to explore, assess and inform potential new deals & discounts</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Online High School Programs</p> <p>Continue to subsidize the management of the COHS and Gale: Excel Adult High School platforms to enable libraries to offer adult learners accredited high school diplomas and career certificates.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6) 23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 f) 5)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6) 23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 5)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6) 23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6) 23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 6) Applies to entire section</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>Explore additional ways to expand and promote the COHS and Gale: Excel Adult High School programs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	
<p>RAILS will continue to seek greater efficiencies, innovations, and enhancements to delivery services.</p>	<p>Work with RAILS members of all sizes and types to determine the most appropriate delivery method to meet their needs.</p> <p>Purchase 11 additional delivery vehicles to replace the aging fleet.</p> <p>Consult with members on delivery issues/concerns on an ongoing basis. Widely promote the use of the delivery help desk.</p> <p>Promote the need for RAILS members to complete quarterly delivery volume counts. Consult with libraries individually as needed.</p> <p>Add new vehicle trackers to delivery trucks to help monitor vehicles.</p> <p>Continue discussions with RAILS Consortia Committee about finding new ways to utilize data to get an accurate count for delivery.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Continue to explore additional opportunities to automate delivery processes to streamline services and improve efficiency.</p> <p>Continue providing high-quality statewide delivery services to CARLI (Consortium of Academic & Research Libraries in Illinois) members via ILDS (Illinois Library Delivery Service).</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 e) 1), 2), & 3)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 e) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 e) 6)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 e) 5) H)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 e) 5) H)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 e) 5) H)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 e) 6)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 e) 5) H)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 e) 1)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Continue working with GeoMARC (formerly Laboratory for Applied Spatial Analysis) on potential future improvements to RAILS delivery service, including delivery route efficiencies.	23 ILAC 3030.215 e) 1)
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.	<p style="text-align: center;">General</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Collaborate with and support the work of the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC).</p> <p>Continue to review the RAILS Resource Sharing Plan to reflect new legislation and updated areas of focus.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Promote/Support LLSAP Membership</p> <p>Continue to support six LLSAPs (CCS, Pinnacle, PrairieCat, Rock River Library Consortium, RSA, and SWAN) financially via the LLSAP Support Grant, as well as offering the use of RAILS meeting spaces and other services. Continue to maintain open lines of communication and leverage organizational partnerships with LLSAPs to collectively enhance services to libraries.</p> <p>Continue to offer the Catalog Membership Grant to fund one-time costs for libraries wishing to join an LLSAP, with ongoing evaluation and adjustment of the grant process framework to maximize support to nonautomated libraries.</p> <p>Promote the value of consortium membership to all types and sizes of RAILS libraries via RAILS communication tools, committee work, and member encounters.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 3)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 f) 3</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 3)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 1)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>Continue to work with RAILS Consortia Committee to investigate and recommend ways to improve and grow consortial services in Illinois.</p> <p>Expand and Promote Find More Illinois (FMI)</p> <p>Recruit libraries to join FMI.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target promotions at libraries that would grow and enhance resources available through FMI. <p>Continue to promote the growth of FMI, including developing new recruitment strategies.</p> <p>Continue onboarding CCS libraries into the FMI program.</p> <p>Continue expanding the Academic Library Lender Only Pilot Program.</p> <p>Enhance the FMI program with add-on services as appropriate. Implement operational efficiencies as the program grows.</p> <p>Provide training, consulting, and technical support to FMI libraries.</p> <p>Work with out-of-state library serving organizations to expand FMI.</p> <p>Evaluate and revise the FMI participation fee structure to ensure ongoing value to members of all types and sizes.</p> <p>Promote FMI through new branding and materials to help member libraries market the service.</p> <p>Create and implement new FMI dashboard to help member libraries gather and analyze data.</p> <p>Establish a FMI user group and/or committee working group to incorporate member feedback to assist with providing insights into recruitment,</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 2) 23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 8) 23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 9) All apply to FMI section 23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 3)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 3)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 9)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 3) 23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) g) 23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 2) 23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 1)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>program enhancements, and best practices for participants.</p> <p>Continue in communication with the Systems (CPLS and IHLS) about the benefits of participation in FMI.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Support High-Quality Cataloging</p> <p>Continue to develop, update, and deliver training courses and presentations on cataloging, classification, and metadata topics to RAILS members via Zoom webinars, Niche Academy, and the Moodle platform.</p> <p>Work with IHLS, SHARE, and the Cataloging Maintenance Center to cross-promote cataloging training and ensure complementary offerings and schedules.</p> <p>Continue support and consulting in cataloging-related activities for eRead Illinois and Find More Illinois.</p> <p>Continue creating and maintaining cataloging guidance for members, including the Best Practices for Consortial Cataloging and Cataloging Staff Competencies documents.</p> <p>Collaborate with IHLS and the iCamp committee to coordinate and manage the mentorship program, expanding participation and enhancing program resources. Implement quarterly feedback surveys to continuously improve the support provided to mentors and mentees.</p> <p>Continue to explore participation in the Library of Congress' Program for Cooperative Cataloging and its Name Authority Cooperative Program for South Asian materials.</p> <p>Continue offering World Language Cataloging Service as detailed below and evaluate its impact to identify opportunities for improvement.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">eRead Illinois The Palace Project</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 2) 23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 5) 23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 6) Both apply to entire section</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>Illinois residents, including those not served by a public library.</p> <p>Provide current information on available resources for IHLS to share with their member libraries.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Explore More Illinois (EMI)</p> <p>Continue to grow/expand the number and types of participating attractions. Collaborate with CPLS and IHLS to recruit attractions.</p> <p>Collaborate with CPLS and IHLS to publicize EMI to all Illinois public libraries and to encourage them to participate.</p> <p>Network with ePass (EMI’s software) administrators nationwide to explore new opportunities and solutions and to share best practices.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Other E-Resources Initiatives</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Compile and share information to support member libraries in meeting e-resource accessibility standards.</p> <p>Continue to stay abreast of statewide and national E-Content initiatives.</p> <p>Support statewide efforts and legislation related to favorable pricing for e-books and e-audiobooks for libraries.</p> <p>Partner with other library organizations nationwide to continue dialogue with publishers on need for better e-book access/pricing for libraries/consortia.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b)1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) and 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>

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

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
<p>RAILS will provide leadership in developing and providing resources that will support member libraries' efforts to provide equitable, diverse, and inclusive services.</p>	<p>Continue offering regular EDI training opportunities for all RAILS members. Collaborate with other Illinois stakeholders offering EDI-related continuing education (CE) to avoid duplication of effort.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p>
	<p>Continue offering World Language Cataloging Services grant program statewide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 5)</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 c) 3)</p>
	<p>Recruit attractions for Explore More Illinois of interest to an ethnically and culturally diverse audience.</p>	
	<p>Promote the online high school programs (see above) as addressing the needs of a culturally, economically, and ethnically diverse audience.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G) 23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>
	<p>Promote and provide administrative support as applicable for RAILS EDI-related networking groups.</p>	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>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.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p>
<p>Examine all aspects of RAILS policies, procedures, and core services through an equity lens and make needed improvements.</p>	<p>Continue to grow and develop RAILS' external and internal EDI strategies and initiatives.</p> <p>Continue conducting a thorough analysis/evaluation of RAILS Employee Handbook to ensure that all language and policies meet our EDI goals.</p> <p>Continue the work of the RAILS Climate Team to identify and implement internal best practices and initiatives for RAILS staff.</p> <p>Continue holding regular EDI training sessions for RAILS staff.</p> <p>Continue EDI training specifically for Delivery staff that can be recorded and incorporated into onboarding for new staff.</p> <p>Develop EDI training specifically for RAILS hiring managers that focuses on best practices in recruitment, evaluation, and staff retention.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Provide training/consulting/guidance for member libraries of all types to help them develop a more diverse and representative board.</p> <p>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 email list.</p> <p>Provide training for RAILS members to help them diversify their hiring and recruitment practices.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.250</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	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.	23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1

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 infrastructure needed to offer essential and cutting-edge services to their communities	<p>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.</p> <p>Continue to schedule regular meetings with AISLE, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), IHLS, ILA, and ISL to discuss collaborative projects to help school libraries deal with funding challenges, understand legal/policy changes, and create new resources to help address issues.</p> <p>Participate in a wide variety of efforts to help advocate for continued/increased funding for all types of libraries, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILA Legislative Meetups • Responding to American Library Association (ALA) calls to actions • Continuing to work with the ILA Public Policy and Advocacy Committees to discuss legislation of importance to libraries <p>Keep RAILS libraries informed of important legislative developments affecting libraries.</p> <p>Publicize opportunities for staff from member libraries to advocate for continued/increased funding for libraries as appropriate, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging members to attend ILA Legislative Meetups • Encouraging members to respond to ALA calls to action • Encouraging members to contact their elected officials as appropriate and 	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>providing talking points on specific issues and programs as possible</p> <p>Support AISLE’s statewide efforts to increase the number of certified school librarians through the development of advocacy tools and continued development of the SLATE project.</p> <p>Continue to advocate for a trustee training requirement for public library boards.</p> <p>Assist with libraries in disaster preparedness and addressing crisis situations.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p>
<p>Help member libraries of all types and sizes demonstrate their value to their different stakeholders.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Advocacy Efforts</p> <p>Bring the My Library Is... campaign to a close. Move My Library Is... blog materials to a new RAILS-branded blog. Move other My Library Is... materials to new advocacy section of RAILS website.</p> <p>Continue to encourage staff at all levels from all types and sizes of libraries to contribute posts to the RAILS blog to share best practices in telling the library story.</p> <p>Continue offering grants to help libraries with limited resources to tell their stories more effectively.</p> <p>Continue to work with IHLS to further expand and publicize advocacy efforts to staff at all types and sizes of libraries statewide.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) B)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>Continue to work with AISLE, CARLI, IACRL, ILA, SLA-IL, and other stakeholders on common goals/ activities to avoid duplication of efforts.</p> <p>Engage with marketing/communications staff from member libraries to ensure that they have access to advocacy materials.</p> <p>(See additional campaign activities in previous section.)</p>	23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)
<p>Professional development and member engagement efforts are future-focused, crossing library types and specific to individual library type needs.</p>	<p>Provide CE/consulting on general resource sharing issues identified in the administrative rules, including interlibrary loan, the ILLINET Interlibrary Loan Code, nonresident services, the RAILS Resource Sharing Policy, etc.</p> <p>Provide CE/consulting on library advocacy, management and practice, and other core service areas identified in the administrative rules.</p> <p>Provide CE/consulting to help libraries meet per capita grant requirements and standards for their type of library.</p> <p>Offer CE/consulting assistance and other resources to help libraries of all types and sizes to develop/maintain a current strategic plan.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Continue to develop Library Pulse pages on the RAILS website to help members respond to current issues, challenges, and trends.</p> <p>Continue to gather member input on CE needs from all sizes and types of RAILS libraries and implement training to meet those needs.</p> <p>Continue to partner with AISLE to identify training needs for school library staff and to</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>offer joint CE opportunities based on that feedback.</p> <p>Continue offering PHD credits for school librarians using PD+.</p> <p>Work with statewide stakeholders to plan and offer Directors University, the statewide training initiative for new public library directors. Publicize widely.</p> <p>Work with statewide stakeholders to plan and offer Directors University Advanced to offer intermediate-level training for library directors. Publicize widely.</p> <p>Work with statewide stakeholders to plan and offer Directors University on Demand to offer online, asynchronous training for library directors. Publicize widely.</p> <p>Continue to work with statewide stakeholders to evaluate feedback from the first RAILS Catalyst cohort, to refine and plan for the second iteration of this leadership development program.</p> <p>Continue partnership with United for Libraries to provide statewide, online, on-demand trustee training. Publicize training widely.</p> <p>Continue to transition library staff to using RAILS Academy for trainings and webinars. Consistently and routinely update RAILS Academy to offer a wide variety of asynchronous, on-demand training in core library functions for staff at all levels.</p> <p>Continue to support the iLEAD Trustee Learning Portal.</p> <p>Consult with/attend library board meetings as appropriate to help boards meet legal requirements and to develop leadership skills.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Continue partnership with HR Source to provide CE and discounted membership. Publicize widely.	23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)
	Continue partnership with Ancel Glink to offer statewide FOIA/OMA hotline. Publicize widely.	23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)

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	
	<p>Continue conversations with ISL, IHLS, ILA and other partners to explore possibility of revising system membership standards to help libraries of all types provide better service to their communities.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">L2 (Library Directory and Learning Calendar)</p> <p>Ask ISL to continue to provide continued grant funding to support L2.</p> <p>Continue to provide statewide leadership for L2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host, maintain, and develop additional features. • Provide ongoing user support and documentation to library staff, networking groups, and sponsor organizations (LLSAPs, ISL, library systems). • Ensure compliance with web accessibility requirements and implement enhancements as needed • Update and maintain externally sourced directory data. • Provide technical support, ongoing reporting, and any necessary development for annual library certification • Facilitate the statewide advisory group (L2G2) and participation in the Intercept open-source community. 	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 4) A) Applies to entire L2 Section</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>Continue to contract with Aten Design Group for L2 support and development.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Certification</p> <p>Work with ISL, IHLS, and other partners to improve and enhance the annual certification process.</p> <p>Work with RAILS members to ensure that they complete the certification process.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Other Collaborative Initiatives</p> <p>RAILS Executive Director continues to serve on Illinois State Library Advisory Committee.</p> <p>Work with CPLS and IHLS to schedule meetings and other get-togethers for system staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule regular meetings to discuss statewide services and ideas for collaborating to promote those services. <p>Continue to schedule regular meetings with AISLE, CPS, IHLS, ILA, ISL, CARLI and others as appropriate to discuss collaborative projects to benefit school libraries as referenced above.</p> <p>Collaborate with AISLE, IHLS, ILA, and ISL to plan Illinois School Library Workers Symposium, supporting individuals working in school libraries with no formal library education.</p> <p>Collaborate with AISLE, IHLS, CARLI, ILA, and others to continue volunteer regional response teams to help libraries facing materials challenges.</p> <p>Continue providing leadership and support to Illinois special libraries community, including the potential creation of an ILA special librarians forum.</p> <p>Continue regular meetings with the Commissioner of the Chicago Public Library to discuss collaboration possibilities.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 4) C)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 4) C)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>Continue regular meetings with the Executive Director of CARLI to discuss collaboration possibilities.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>
	<p>Broadband & Digital Equity</p>	
	<p>Continue to engage and provide leadership in statewide efforts focused on broadband expansion, technology adoption, and digital equity issues, including continued service representing libraries on the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity’s Broadband Advisory Council.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>
	<p>Continue to partner with Cook County Digital Equity to support suburban Cook County libraries’ digital navigation services and projects. Ensure that materials and models are adaptable and reusable for non-Cook County libraries.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>
	<p>Continue to update library staff on statewide projects including funding opportunities, legislative efforts, and ways for libraries to provide feedback on and participate in broadband and digital equity initiatives. Produce content which demonstrates the importance of the issue to libraries.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>
	<p>Collaborate with Illinois Heartland Library System to facilitate RAILS member libraries’ access to their laptop lending program.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>
	<p>Partner on grant initiatives, presentations, and other projects with library-related organizations to improve broadband and digital equity in the state of Illinois.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>
	<p>Continue to partner with the Digital Equity Action Research Lab at University of Illinois’ iSchool to investigate libraries’ capacity to provide digital inclusion services.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1)</p>
	<p>Provide as-needed consultation and develop new offerings that support libraries’ digital inclusion services, staff competencies, partnerships, and participation in E-Rate.</p>	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
<p>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.</p>	<p>Develop new targeted email communications for specific library types.</p> <p>Mail promotional pieces to libraries not receiving RAILS delivery as appropriate to ensure they are aware of the programs/services available to them.</p> <p>Continue to meet with AISLE, CPS, IHLS, ILA, and ISL to address the needs of school libraries as referenced above.</p> <p>Continue to work with other stakeholders statewide and beyond on school library data project. (See next section.)</p> <p>(See also Communications section below.)</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>Continue to work with AISLE, CPS, IHLS, ILA, ISL, and other stakeholders statewide on the SLATE project including library staff, administrators, boards, and other about the importance of school libraries and the need to support and fund them.</p> <p>Continue to improve and expand the SLATE data dashboard through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census data collection project • Direct member feedback • Continued development of expanded features and functions <p>Continue developing a roadmap for a centralized data hub to coordinate and manage data sources used to support RAILS’ services to members and staff.</p> <p>Create documentation of requirements, maintenance, governance, and access to core data sources used by RAILS staff.</p> <p>Enhance and expand staff training on data literacy and proper data usage.</p> <p>Implement a data request ticket system to better track, triage, and support data projects, tasks, and</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 b) 1) 23 ILAC 3030.215 d) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>collaborations across RAILS’ departments and strategic initiatives.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>
	<p>Continue progress on RAILCAR, a data collection and analysis tool designed to supplement existing data related to LLSAPs and library automation. This tool is integrated into the processes for both the LLSAP Support and Catalog Membership Grants.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>
	<p>Continue to refine the RAILS Resource Sharing Map and add new features for member libraries.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>
	<p>Continue to develop content and plan for the release of a new data-related website connected to the main RAILS website.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>
	<p>Continue development of the <i>Anatomy of a Public Library</i> demographic profile project</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>
	<p>Work with Delivery to modernize route maps and analysis</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>
	<p>Support the Palace Project with various data analysis projects to assess performance and ordering trends</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>
	<p>Host the second Libraries Count: RAILS Data Conference event. This event will include hands-on data workshops to help libraries become more familiar with their data.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>
	<p>Continue to refine the Find More Illinois and Explore More Illinois data dashboards. Develop and maintain dashboards for other RAILS services and projects as appropriate.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 2)</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	(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.	<p>Continue to work with the RAILS Board Universal Service Committee to find and implement solutions to challenges related to the unserved in Illinois.</p> <p>Explore the role of community college libraries in meeting the needs of the unserved</p> <p>Review previous legislative attempts towards universal service and consider legislative proposals to PPC during FY27.</p> <p>Continue to work with statewide partners to seek legislative support for statewide access to electronic resources for all Illinois residents, including the unserved.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Identify member libraries who have not updated their L2 non-resident info in over 18 months. Coordinate outreach to those libraries to receive updated information.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 f) 5)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 f) 5)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 f) 5)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 f) 5)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 f) 4)</p> <p>23 ILAC 3030.215 f) 5)</p>

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	<p style="text-align: center;">Member Recruitment</p> <p>Engage with libraries of all types that express an interest in RAILS membership.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 4) b)</p> <p>Applies to entire section</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
<p>to ensure they are aware of system programs/ services of benefit to them and to better understand, anticipate, and meet their needs.</p>	<p>Visit potential members to ensure they meet membership criteria.</p> <p>Work with RAILS Board on new member recommendations for approval by ISL.</p> <p>General Member Communication/Engagement</p> <p>Promote available programs/services via RAILS communication tools and member visits, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAILS website • Weekly <i>RAILS E-News</i> • Social media channels • 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 • Offering online site visits to any interested library to remind them of system benefits • 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 • 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 <p>Contract for continued support for new RAILS website, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Custom development of Gutenberg editor 	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) G) Applies to entire section</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miscellaneous design tweaks, feature development, and software and server updates <p>Develop new in-house marketing plan to help prioritize marketing efforts.</p> <p>In collaboration with Resource Sharing team, develop new member benefit letter/ROI statement for member libraries.</p> <p>Continue to make improvements to the weekly <i>RAILS E-News</i>.</p> <p>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.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	<p>Communicate regularly with the board through the RAILS board mailing list and other means.</p> <p>Ensure that the board is aware of RAILS' progress in meeting the goals and objectives of our new strategic plan.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Plan/implement orientation session at Burr Ridge service center for all new RAILS Board members. Invite existing board members to attend for a refresher.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Continue to promote and encourage diversity on the RAILS Board as referenced above.</p> <p>Support board conference/meeting attendance as appropriate.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.250 Applies to entire section</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	<p>Work with RAILS Board Policy Committee to establish schedule for regular review of RAILS policies.</p>	
<p>Recruit RAILS staff as needed to meet roles specified in administrative rules and to support strategic plan goals and objectives. Actively seek a diverse staff in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identify, and other factors.</p>	<p>Development of a new 2027-2029 strategic plan with expansive feedback from the RAILS membership. Include data driven evaluative tools for measuring success.</p> <p>Encourage/support professional development for staff.</p> <p>Continue to hold regular staff meetings to keep all staff informed of the latest RAILS developments and to help staff at different service centers engage with each other.</p> <p>Continue work of RAILS Employee Committees to develop collaborative activities for all staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan in-person staff in-service day in FY 2027. • Offer regular staff engagement activities at service centers throughout the year. <p>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.</p> <p>Continue having pre-employment physical examinations for delivery staff.</p> <p>Update safety internal safety procedures and continue staff discussions about emergency preparedness.</p> <p>Continue to prioritize EDI-related staff activities and initiatives as referenced above.</p>	<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 3) Applies to entire section</p>
<p>Maintain robust technology infrastructure</p>		<p>23 ILAC 3030.215 a) 5) Applies to entire section</p>

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
<p>needed to carry out all RAILS programs/services.</p>	<p>Replace aging climate control systems in Burr Ridge datacenter.</p> <p>Continue to improve security practices across wide area networks and IT systems.</p> <p>Complete keyless entry security upgrades for all RAILS Service centers.</p> <p>Continue to maintain and enhance the Delivery mobile app and associated local web app for data collection and analysis. Maintain iPads and provide user support for apps and equipment.</p> <p>Continue to maintain and enhance internal apps for HR and contract tracking.</p> <p>Support RAILS staff in ongoing identification and adoption of software tools in place to support their work as technology and needs evolve, including scheduling solutions, increased use of cloud-based file sharing and collaboration, security features, and others.</p> <p>Investigate assistive technology in RAILS meeting rooms to accommodate persons with hearing impairment.</p> <p>Continue to utilize and refine our project request process for staff to inform and request input on IT-related projects they are planning.</p> <p>Investigate a potential transition to a cloud hosting service for RAILS websites. Evaluate sites and begin implementation for those that are identified as good candidates.</p> <p>Investigate upgrades to the video conferencing equipment in the Deirdre Brennan Meeting Room to allow for smoother video tracking.</p> <p>Lead and support the continued investigation and implementation of AI tools and related procedures for RAILS staff use as appropriate.</p>	

Objectives	Planned Activities	System Standard
	Update and expand disaster recovery plan and staff cybersecurity training.	