



DATE: September 18, 2026
TO: RAILS Board of Directors
FROM: Joe Filapek, Associate Executive Director
SUBJECT: 10.1 Strategic Plan Update

As part of our ongoing strategic plan refresh, we are pleased to share a first draft of the refreshed plan's goals and objectives with the RAILS Board. As a reminder, the four strategic goals remain the same as those in our current strategic plan. The objectives under each goal, however, have been modified based on the feedback and perspectives we have received throughout the planning process, including engagement with RAILS members, Board members, and staff.

The draft objectives presented today were informed by input gathered through the member survey, focus groups, interviews, and other stakeholder engagement. They were also reviewed by the Strategic Plan Steering Committee during their September meeting, whose feedback resulted in several modifications to the draft. The attached draft reflects the ongoing process of listening and identifying the areas where RAILS can have the greatest impact in supporting our member libraries.

This draft is not yet the final strategic plan. During October, we will share the draft objectives with RAILS membership and staff to provide additional opportunities for engagement and to gather further insight into how these objectives can best support the needs and priorities of our member libraries. We wanted to provide the Board with the current draft at this stage as an opportunity for preliminary feedback and discussion, while maintaining our timeline to present a final draft strategic plan to the Board at the November meeting.

It is also important to note that the objectives are intentionally broad. The final phase of our strategic planning engagement with our consultant will involve working with RAILS staff to translate these objectives into actionable and measurable goals and activities. This work will help ensure that the strategic plan provides clear direction while also giving staff the ability to identify specific actions and measures of progress.

We look forward to hearing the Board's initial thoughts and reactions to the draft objectives during our upcoming Board meeting.

Strategic Goal 1

RAILS provides leadership in ensuring sustainable, equitable resource sharing for all member libraries

- Objective 1: Provide innovative library delivery services in environmentally and economically sustainable ways
- Objective 2: Expand library participation in shared catalogs
- Objective 3: Save money and add value for libraries through resource sharing

Strategic Goal 2

RAILS models best practices in equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA)

- Objective 1: Embed EDIA into internal organizational practices
- Objective 2: Provide digital accessibility and inclusion guidance and tools for libraries
- Objective 3: Advance EDIA best practices through member-focused continuing education

Strategic Goal 3

RAILS assists member libraries in preparing for the future

- Objective 1: Strengthen the Illinois library community through leadership development, networking, and connections
- Objective 2: Equip libraries to tell their stories and increase their influence
- Objective 3: Prepare libraries for changing environments and technologies through future-focused education and planning
- Objective 4: Advance the long-term viability of RAILS and its member libraries through advocacy and proactive practices

Strategic Goal 4

RAILS leads alongside member libraries to develop and strengthen the Illinois library community and expand services to all

- Objective 1: Sustain and strengthen our influence through local, state, and national partnerships
- Objective 2: Continue to collaborate with the Illinois State Library and the Illinois Heartland Library System to advocate for public library service to Illinois's one million unserved residents
- Objective 3: Champion the needs of all library types through coalition building and inclusive engagement
- Objective 4: Increase awareness of RAILS benefits and services especially among different library types, stakeholders, and levels of library staff