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DATE: November 14, 2026

TO: RAILS Board of Directors

FROM: Joe Filapek, Associate Executive Director

SUBJECT: 8.1 Strategic Plan

We are pleased to present the final draft of the RAILS strategic plan refresh for the Board's consideration and approval. Joining us for this discussion will be our strategic planning consultant, Cindy Fesemeyer, who will provide an overview of the process that led to this final draft and share insights from the engagement and feedback gathered throughout the process. Following the Board's review of the draft in September, we received more than 150 comments combined from RAILS staff and members from our online Padlet activity. While the feedback was generally supportive of the draft, it also provided valuable insights that will help inform the work needed to support and advance our objectives.

The final draft includes just one change from the version presented to the Board in September. In Objective 3 of Goal 3, we replaced the phrase "future-focused education and planning" with "innovative education and planning." This adjustment was made in response to feedback suggesting that "future-focused" was duplicative of language already used in Strategic Goal 3. Separately, we are continuing to review the RAILS vision statement and hope to engage the Board in a separate discussion to review the current statement and explore the possibility of a revised vision.

We are grateful for the tremendous level of engagement and thoughtful input from the RAILS Board, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, RAILS staff, and our membership throughout this process. Their contributions have been instrumental in shaping this strategic planning refresh and ensuring that it reflects the needs and aspirations of our member libraries. We look forward to the discussion at the November 20 Board meeting and respectfully ask the Board to approve the final draft of the strategic plan.

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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 innovative 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