

MEMO

TO: State Library Commission
FROM: Duane Anderson & Karen Strege
RE: Strategic Plan Restructuring - Can We Retool Existing Employees?
DATE: April 19, 2000

At the Library Commission meeting on April 12th, the issue of retraining or retooling existing employees was brought up as an alternative for Reduction In Force (RIF). We would like to briefly address this alternative and explain our rationale for using retooling in only some circumstances.

The restructuring called for the reduction of two of the four Grade 15 GIS programmer analyst positions we currently have on staff. The new plan also calls for splitting our current System Administrator (Grade 15) position with Program 1, and adding a new Web Administrator (Grade 15) to also be split with Program 1. The basic question posed is 'Would it be possible to retool two Grade 15 GIS programmer analysts to fulfill the duties of the system administrator, web administrator, and/or any other vacant position at the state library?' The short answer is 'retooling opportunities depend on the employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and the requirements of the position.'

For example, if a staff member in a position to be RIFed possesses the needed KSAs for a vacant or new position, then management would surely approve a transfer. However, in some cases, a transfer is not feasible.

For example, the skills we need for the system administration position are highly technical and specialized, just as are those skills for GIS programmer analysts. The system administration skills are not acquired with a weekend training course, a two-week training course, or even months of training. They are acquired after a combination of extensive training (there are two year Associate Degree programs in computer technology with network options) and several **years** of experience. Even if we had existing staff that was willing and anxious to make this change, it could be years before we had the level of experience really required for the positions. We are not willing to risk our entire computer infrastructure on a training assignment that may last for many years.

Second, there is the cost factor. Our last system administrator had no formal training in this discipline and was sent to several training sessions during his tenure. The last one he attended cost \$1,900 for a 5-day course. We do not

have the resources to fund the long-term training of these positions, nor is it our responsibility to do so.

If the Commission approves the reorganization plan, we will have a Web Administrator position open. Like the system administrator position, the skills we need here are highly technical and specialized. All agency staff will be welcome to apply in an internal recruitment process; however, the same qualifications apply here as in the discussion of the system administrator. It may be that current staff members do not have the KSAs needed to fulfill the requirements of this position. In the case where the employee's training needs are minimal and fiscally achievable, the agency would agree to retool the employee. However, the agency cannot offer retooling if the employees' training needs are too extensive and expensive.

Another position, the technical position in the Montana Library Network Project, is currently available through the internal recruitment process. This position also requires a certain set of KSAs. We welcome staff applications for the position and will evaluate their existing qualifications with any training needs to make a decision regarding filling the position with existing staff members.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that we carefully considered all plausible options for continued employment with MSL instead of reducing in force two of the Grade 15 GIS programmer analysts. We hope this memo provides more clarity as to the decisions we must make when considering current employees for new or vacant positions.