



MEMO

To: Federation Task Force Members
From: Tracy Cook, Lead Consulting & Learning Librarian
Subject: Possible changes for federations
Date: December 30, 2022

During our first meeting we ended with several questions about potential changes to the structure of federations. As you think about the role you identified for federations, consider the following questions and information.

1. Changing federation boundaries
 - a. Should we ask the State Library Commission to change federation boundaries?
 - b. If we changed them, what do we consider an ideal size?
 - c. The formula for how funding is awarded is based on a combination of the number of federations and the decennial population within federations. We also consider the travel costs of coordinators who are required to attend at least one Commission meeting annually. Would it be helpful for MSL staff to run some numbers to show the impact of dividing federations into smaller areas?
2. Should nonpublic libraries continue to be included in federation boundaries? If yes, should they be awarded funding? What form should that funding take? Given the role of federations is this the best place for nonpublic libraries to connect with their public library peers?
 - a. MCA 22-1-402 includes the following types of libraries – “Any other public, school, special, college, or university library or town, city, or county within the federation area may participate in a federation.”
 - b. No federations have covered the costs of the non-public library director’s attendance at federation meetings. Federations stopped covering the mileage costs of public libraries many years ago. Public libraries are welcome to use their funds to cover mileage, but a set amount is not awarded.
 - c. Federations have awarded funding to non-public libraries in the following ways.
 - i. Most well-known consistent example is in Golden Plains where the Ft. Peck Tribal College Library was awarded up to \$875 to help cover the costs of the director’s attendance at the Montana Library Association annual conference.
 - ii. Other examples included grants awarded to school librarians to attend continuing education of their choice.

- iii. Golden Plains set aside \$500 for any school librarian who needed it for continuing education.
 1. Hope was to encourage participation in the federation. While a few school librarians/teachers attended meetings, regular participation did not occur.
 2. Goal was to support teachers and encourage attendance at the annual MLA conference.
 3. Public library directors in the federation let their local school librarians know about the grants.
 4. The federation continues to allocate funding for these grants.
- iv. South Central allocated \$1500 for multi-type libraries to apply for funding for continuing education and training. Libraries could apply for up to \$250.
 1. The grants started in 2003. The hope was to get more non-public librarians to participate in the federation.
 2. At first it worked well although there was never sustained, regular participation in the federation.
 3. The coordinator would mail 100s of letters to all the area school libraries letting them know about the grants. By the end of the program, the same 2-3 people were receiving the grant.
 4. Because of the workload, the lack of participation in the federation, the lack of reach, and a perception that this funding might not be needed the federation stopped the program in 2015.
3. Making federations more valuable for board members. One of the unique parts of the federation structure is the emphasis on including library board members. We discussed our ideas for encouraging board member participation and making federations more valuable for them. Any additions or changes? Is this still a priority?
 - a. Initial ideas proposed: explain the role of board members versus directors, have trustee breakout sessions, share federation history, think about who else could ask a trustee to attend - could MSL commission send an invite letter to trustees, keep Zoom option, make a short video for federation board chair and vice chair with explanation of roles and tips
4. Raising awareness of federations - Is there a need to make others aware of federations and what they do? Given the potential role of federations, how would raising awareness help them fulfill their role? What benefits would it bring to federations and their members?
 - a. Who is our audience? Do we need library patrons to know about federations? Do we need local government officials to know about federations?
 - b. What do we need them to know?
 - c. What ideas do we have about how to raise awareness?