



MEMO

To: Montana State Library Commission
From: Tracy Cook, Lead Consulting and Learning Librarian
Subject: Questions from Federation Task Force
Date: January 26, 2023

The Federation Task Force has met twice and is close to adopting recommendations for the Commission to consider.

What we need from the Commission

- Feedback on what the Commission values about the current budgeting/plan of service and annual reporting process for library federations.
- Overall feedback on the direction the federation task force is taking.

Why we need the Commission's input

- In 2022, the State Library Commission directed Montana State Library (MSL) staff to create a task force to review federations.
- This request was driven by questions from Commissioners, public library directors, and public library board members about ways to make the federations more effective.
- Per MCA 22-1-103, the Commission establishes library federations. The [Administrative Rules within 10.102.51](#) spell out rules governing the operations of federations. As part of those rules, the Commission is charged with approving the plans of service (budgets) and annual reports of federations.
- The task force would like to ensure any recommendations that change the process and administrative rules align with Commission authority and preferences.

Federation overview

- There is a 30 minute [history of federations video](#) that walks through the purpose of federations and how they have changed.
- Key points about federations
 - Montana is currently divided up into six regions call federations. Any public, school, academic, or special library within that geographic area is eligible to be a part of the federation.
 - Federations were created to expand and improve public library services in Montana.
 - Public libraries are the primary libraries active in library federations.

- Currently, \$225,000 is divided between the six federations using the formula outlined in [ARM 10.102.5102](#). The funding is used for a variety of purposes including payment for statewide projects like the Montana Shared Catalog, continuing education for library directors, staff, and board members, and library outreach and programming. The annual reports describe how the funds are spent. Details of federation spending can be found on [the Federation Grant Report dashboard](#).
- Federations meet twice a year. The meetings include a report from the State Library, a business meeting, and continuing education.
- Federations are periodically reviewed for efficiency and effectiveness, most recently in 2007.

Federation Task Force Overview

- Minutes from the November 2022 and January 2023 meetings can be found in the [meeting materials for January 17, 2023](#). These minutes will give you in depth details about the work of the task force. More information about the task force including members is available on the [federation task force website](#).
- Key points about the work of the federation task force
 - Task force members agree that the role of federations is bringing regional librarians and board members together for continuing education and networking. The funding is also critically important for offering better library services in local communities.
 - Task force members recognize the unique nature of federations and are working towards recommendations that balance this uniqueness with consistency across the state.
 - Tentative recommendations the task force is making that rise to the level of the State Library Commission
 - Changing the plan of service/budgeting and annual reporting process to be less cumbersome for federation members and coordinators. This may involve administrative rules changes to ensure accountability for funds. It will include a change to the process and/or forms used for the plan of service and annual report. It is possible that a change to this process will result in some federations only meeting once a year.
 - Changing federation bylaws and parts of the administrative rules of Montana to give board members the vote but not require board members to chair federation meetings.
 - Requesting some additional funding to support annual retreats, collaborative efforts, and the participation of interested tribal college libraries.
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Questions for the Commission

- The plan of service is the budget for the federation. It outlines how federations are going to spend the funding they receive. Several years ago, federation coordinators agreed to use the same template to improve reporting. Plans of service are adopted by the State Library Commission in June.
 - Please review the [FY22 Broad Valleys Plan of Service](#) and consider the following questions
 - Does this document give you information you need to decide whether to fund the federation?
 - What other information would you like to know about how the funds are going to be spent?
 - Is there any information that you do not need and could be removed from the document in order to simplify the process?
 - Do you like seeing the budgets for each federation or would you prefer to see a statewide document that gives a high level overview of the amount spent on each program?
- The annual report is presented to the Commission at the October meeting. Libraries that receive federation funding are asked to report their expenses.
 - Please review the [FY22 Annual Federation Report](#) and consider the following questions
 - What do you most value about this report? What are the most useful pieces of information for you?
 - What would you change about this report? Is there anything you would like removed from the report? Anything you would like added to the report?
 - Do you want to see individual library expenditures reported or do you prefer to focus on regional/statewide expenditures? In other words, is it helpful to see exactly how each library spent their funds or is it more valuable to see the total amount of money spent on continuing education, technology, or a statewide project?
 - Federation coordinators attend your October meeting to give a report. What do you particularly appreciate about their presence at your meeting? What information do they give you that is helpful for you in your work?
- Questions about the federation task force and their recommendations – do you have any questions about the funding recommendations or any other items you saw in the draft minutes?