

**Federation Task Force Minutes**  
**Tuesday, January 17, 2023 online via Zoom**

**Task Force Attendees:** Crystal Buchanan, Lori Cannady, Tracy Cook, Abbi Dooley, Valerie Frank, Tammy Hall, Kathleen Ralph, Kelly Reisig, Jonna Underwood

**Absent:** Pam Henley, Nancy Schmidt, Jacque Scott

**Guests:** Rolane Christofferson, Ashley Cummins, Janet Livingston, Nancy Royan

Meeting called to order at 1:30pm

**Minutes from November 10, 2022 meeting** – Kathleen Ralph moved to approve the minutes as presented. Tammy Hall seconded. Motion carried unanimously. No abstentions.

### **Library Needs**

- List is not prioritized.
- Suggestion to recognize the need for libraries to have a process/policy for parents to express concerns. Tracy suggested this might fit under informed policy and positive relations with community leaders.
- Suggestion to add having an MSL staff member or commissioner attend local government meetings once a year. Tracy suggested this might fit under build positive relationships with local government leaders.
- Overall, group thought list was good. They recognized that there will be differences in what libraries need and what that looks like in terms of support.

### **Role of federations**

- No questions about the description of different groups
- Federations clearly seemed to fulfill a need for regional training and support. One of their most positive values is connecting regional library directors, board members, and staff. This meets the need of well-informed staff and board members and providing professional development opportunities for library directors, staff, and board members.

- Group discussed consistency of federations and what that meant. Primarily, it had to do with the longevity and regular schedule of federations. While federations are unique, there are similarities in what libraries need to achieve.
- Group want to emphasize the importance of networking for trustees.
- **Consensus** - the role of federations is to provide regional training and networking opportunities. The funding that comes with federations is critical for library success. Federations address the library need for stable funding and well-informed library board members, directors, and staff.

### **Federation boundaries**

- Smaller federations might be more effective. The group discussed the pros and cons of having smaller boundaries. There is historical precedent. Federation boundaries have changed over time. The most recent change occurred in the early 2000s.
- The State Library Commission has the authority to change boundaries. Libraries have a mechanism for requesting changes.
- The group reviewed each federation and whether there was a need to change the size of the federation. Only one federation seemed to have an interest in this proposal.
- The group discussed whether mini retreats held in different places in the federation would help or if an annual retreat would be effective. Are there other ways to address this issue?
- **Consensus** – take no action on this item. Leave federation boundaries as is.

### **Non-public library participation in federations**

- Non-public libraries can benefit from continuing education held at the meetings.
- Golden Plains is the only federation that has a longstanding tradition of giving funding directly to a non-public library. It is the Ft. Peck Tribal Library. The former director was an active participant in the federation and added a lot to federation discussions.
- Group discussed the pros and cons of giving funding to non-public libraries. Realities of the financial situation makes it difficult to give much funding to non-public libraries.
- Group discussed whether to give more funding to tribal libraries that provide public library services. There is current legislation being proposed that would give state aid per capita to tribal college libraries that meet the public library

standards. Group saw value in considering funding for tribal college libraries. At this time, they think more work and research would need to be done to include other non-public libraries.

- **Consensus** – Tracy will calculate how much additional money each federation would need to receive to include tribal college libraries in the funding structure.
- **Consensus** – At this time, the task force is focused on making federations work for the current members. In the future, conversations about shared goals may help inform how and whether to include academic, school, and special libraries and what funding would be needed.

### **Board member participation**

- Group had no additional suggestions for increasing board member participation.
- They emphasized the importance of providing training that is relevant to board members.
- They also discussed how some federations have a clause in the bylaws that require board member attendance. However, other federations don't feel like that requirement is necessary in their area.
- Group discussed the downsides of board members chairing the meeting. They see value in having board members at the meeting. However, it's difficult to get volunteers and seems to make more sense to have the coordinator chair the meeting. Should we remove that requirement?
- Tracy shared public comment from a library director that asked about reducing some of the bureaucracy associated with federations. Could we change/simplify the plan of service and annual reporting? Could removing the board member as a chair requirement help? Could we reduce the amount of time spent on the business meeting? Could federations meet once a year? Tracy polled each federation representative for their votes on whether to review administrative rules and identify ways to simplify the process.
- Group members wanted accountability. They believe there needs to be some stipulations on the funding to comply with the Montana Code.
- **Consensus** – group requested that Tracy review administrative rules and create suggestions for how to simplify the plan of service/reporting process. Tracy will seek Commission input on this piece since they are the governing body.

### **Raise awareness of federations**

- Group members discussed federations and agreed they are an internal library group. There is a need to educate board members, new directors, and maybe local government officials.
- **Consensus** – group requested that Tracy share the federation history video and create a one-page sheet for board members/local government officials that describes federations and their purpose.

### **Funding for retreats**

- Group discussed whether every federation should have an annual retreat. There was a lot of support for the idea because retreats can build relationships and encourage networking and training. People indicated regional, smaller groups that offer training and networking is most valuable. This supports that work.
- Group discussed how retreats reduce the overall amount available to libraries. This was a big concern. They also discussed the importance of making the retreats valuable for board members.
- **Consensus** – group directed Tracy to calculate how much money each federation would need to receive to be able to offer an annual retreat. They recommended using a per capita formula since some federations were bigger than others. All retreats would need to be open to other federation members.

### **Funding for statewide projects/leave at MSL or continue current practice**

- There was public comment asking us to consider having MSL keep funding used by libraries to pay for things like the Montana Shared Catalog or MontanaLibrary2Go. These projects are managed by MSL. It seems inefficient to send a check to a library that turns right around and sends that money back to MSL to pay for a statewide project.
- Group discussed this request. While some members use the funding in this way, other libraries consider these services essential and fund them with local funds.
- There was also concern about accounting for these funds. The expenses would appear on the library side, but the revenue would not appear because it would stay at the state library and be used by MSL to pay for that library's bill.
- Group briefly discussed taking the funding and using it to pay for MontanaLibrary2Go. However, there isn't enough funding to do this.
- Most weren't in favor of this idea although they were open to exploring it in the future.
- **Consensus** – leave the system as is and explore the idea in the future.

**Equitable funding and funding for additional needs** – group ran out of time, so these questions will be moved to a future meeting.

**Next Steps** – Tracy will send out a poll for a February or March meeting. The group will discuss the remaining questions and the research that Tracy conducts. Goal of the next meeting is to create recommendations for the State Library Commission and library community to review.

**Other Business & Announcements** – there were none.

Meeting adjourned at 3:33pm.

DRAFT