



LAYING CORNERSTONE OF CAPITOL, HELENA, JULY 4, 1899

2025 FALL WORKSHOP

# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

PROGRAM AND JOURNAL

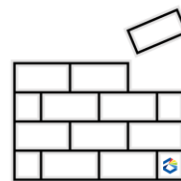
*September 15-16*

*Great Falls, Montana*

*Heritage Inn*



# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

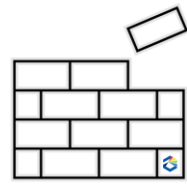


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Cover Image: Ball, James Presley, 1825-1904, *Laying Cornerstone of Capitol, Helena, July 4, 1899*. (1899-07-04). Montana History Portal, accessed 08/08/2025, <https://www.mtmemory.org/nodes/view/73837>

# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## WELCOME TO THE 2025 MONTANA STATE LIBRARY FALL WORKSHOP!



The Montana State Library is committed to strengthening libraries and information services for all Montanans through leadership, advocacy, and service. The outstanding staff and partners of the State Library strive to meet this mission every day.

On September 28 people around the country will celebrate their neighbors on Good Neighbor Day, a tradition that was started in Montana as a way to build connections with those in our communities. I have always thought that we, as Montana librarians, are successful because, like good neighbors, we can rely on one another to get things done.

International library strategist Lorcan Dempsey challenges librarians to think about how we can collaborate to solve infrastructure challenges in ways that improve economies of scale, which then permit librarians and information professionals to focus more resources on innovation and opportunities for community engagement. Said, another way, Lorcan challenges libraires to be good neighbors.

Through consulting services, education, and creative collaboration, we at the State Library focus much of our energy and creative resources to support the infrastructure on which our partners rely. And we challenge ourselves and our partners to be innovative collaborators, and neighbors, in our communities. As a result, Montana libraries are better positioned to be their communities' choice for discovery and exchange of information and ideas. Our dedication to strengthening libraries and information services for all strengthens community life for all Montanans.

We are so glad to be able to gather in our host city of Great Falls to learn, connect, and explore how we each can ensure that libraries are good neighbors and integral institutions, foundational to the life of our communities.

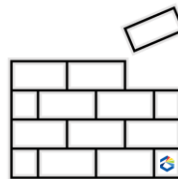
Throughout this program you will find details about the sessions and reflection activities. We invite you to share feedback through the evaluation survey linked throughout the program.

Through our shared commitment to our profession's core values, and by fostering opportunities to work together and to support our Montana neighbors and library community, we will continue to be the wonderful resources on which our communities rely. I look forward to visiting about these opportunities over the next couple of days.

Jennie Stapp

State Librarian

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This project was made possible through funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

## OPENING PLENARY

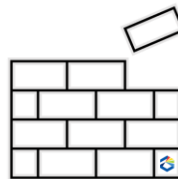
## BEING BRAVE IN THE EVERYDAY

Mazi Robinson

- What are common fears, worries, concerns that pop up when you think about taking a risk or being brave in your life?
- When have you been brave previously in your life?
- What is an area of your life that you know you need to change? What is an area of your life that you are ready to change?
- What does being brave look like for you in your current role?

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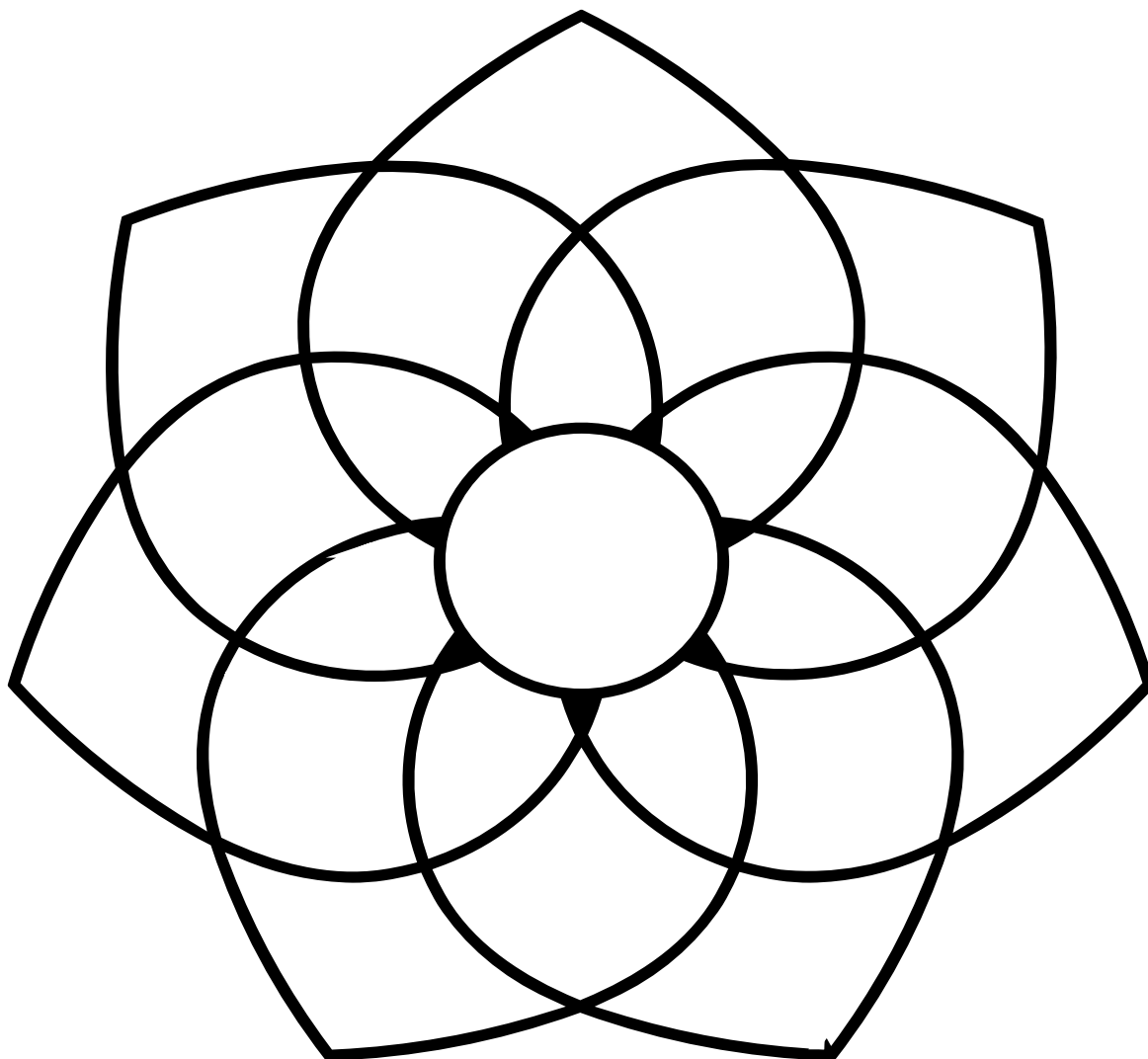
# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



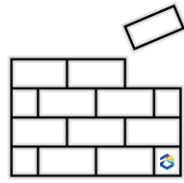
## MORNING CONNECTIONS

10:30-10:45

Break Time to Connect with Colleagues



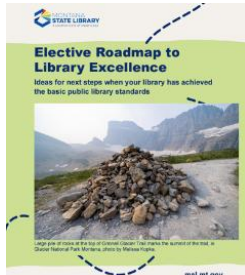
# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

11:00-12:00

### BRAVING THE PATHWAY TO EXCELLENCE



In a scarcity-informed culture, it takes courage to imagine what could be possible and to ask for what we need to move in that direction. In this session we are going to explore the Montana State Library's Elective Roadmap to Library Excellence, and then we are going to brainstorm how we can take real steps towards creating the future that we want for our libraries and our communities. Attendees will emerge from this session with a practical initial plan and concrete next steps.

Cara Orban

### ACTIVITY

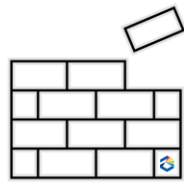
The area I want to focus on is:

- ☐ Staff development
- ☐ Board development
- ☐ Providing better access to library materials
- ☐ Programming
- ☐ Increasing community awareness
- ☐ Improving library structure and funding
- ☐ Planning and evaluation

Prompt	Your Response
I chose this area first because:	
The outcome I want to see in this area is:	
This would benefit my community because:	
The library could achieve this outcome by doing this:	



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To achieve this outcome, we need:

Prompt	Your Response
Who can help?	
How can they help?	
Why would they want to help?	
What conditions need to be in place for you to ask? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Relationships</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Timing (is the budget, political will, capacity there?)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Community support</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Data – demonstrating the need</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other</li></ul>	

## Next Steps

- ☐ I know what we want to accomplish:
  - **If not:** think about the vision or intended outcomes you want to realize.
- ☐ I know what resources we need in order to get it done:
  - **If not:** think about your outcome and work backwards to identify what resources you will need and what partnerships, if any, you want to build.
- ☐ I know who to ask for help:
  - **If not:** revisit your resources list.
- ☐ I have all the conditions in place to ask for help.
  - **If not:** revisit your conditions list and identify which factor(s) you need to work on or wait on.

**The very next step is:**

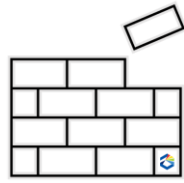


Corey Sloan

- What motivates you to serve on your library board?
- Who do you consider to be your library's strongest advocates?
- How can you, as a board member, strengthen your relationships with important community stakeholders (local government, donors, partner organizations)?
- What other strategies and techniques (not mentioned in the presentation) have you employed to increase your effectiveness as a library board?

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# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## PLENARY SESSION AND LUNCH

12:00-1:30

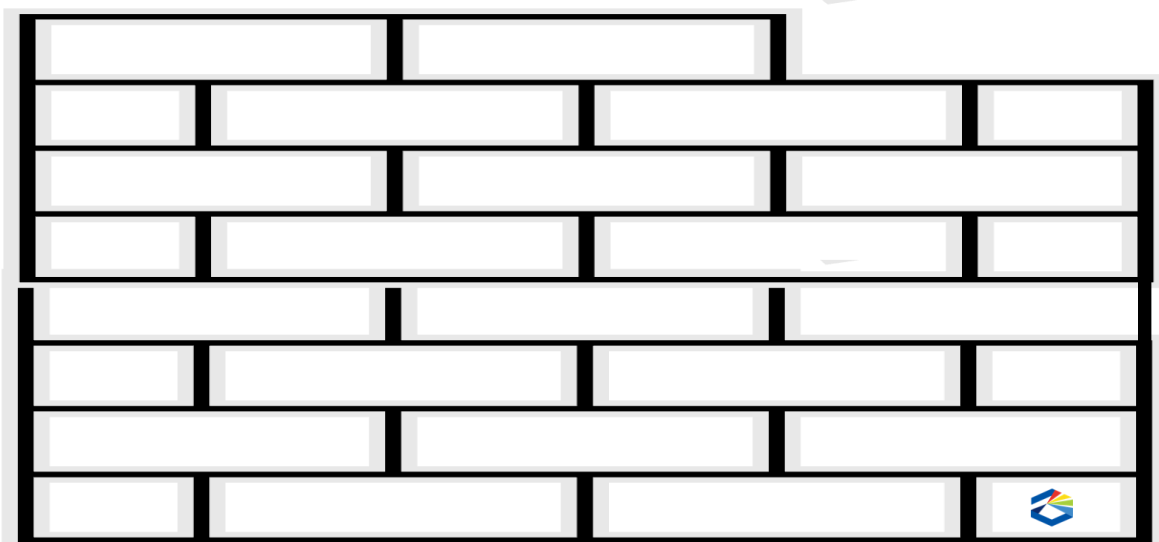
### CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?: INTEGRATING BOUNDARIES AND KINDNESS IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

As much as we are wired for connection, connection is not always easy. Whether in our personal or professional lives, we are all going to encounter people that bug us, frustrate us, or even hurt us. How do we healthily engage with others when the relationship is not what we want it to be? We do so with boundaries and empathy. In this presentation, attendees will learn when and how to set boundaries in their relationships in order to hold onto who they want to be yet still practice empathy and kindness towards others.

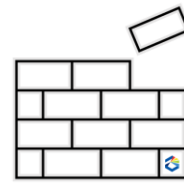
Mazi Robinson

#### Reflections

- In which relationships are you more likely to overfunction and overstep? Why?
- What are fears or concerns that keep you from setting boundaries in certain relationships?
- Thinking of the airport example... do you hear people's complaints as requests? What is challenging about giving empathy rather than problem solving?
- Which of the following empathy blockers do you often fall into when you think you are being empathetic:
  - Advice giving/problem solving
  - Emotionally correcting
  - Cheerleader
  - Comparing your experience to theirs



# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## AFTERNOON BREAKOUT

1:45- 2:45

### NAVIGATING PERFORMANCE CONVERSATIONS WITH GRACE

It's easy to give positive feedback. Challenges arise when you need to discuss a performance or behavioral issue that is negatively impacting you, the library, or other people. This session will discuss why we avoid hard conversations, the consequences, and how we can be more successful when we need to give someone negative feedback.

Tracy Cook

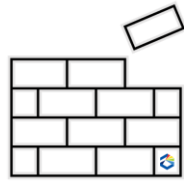
#### ***Wise practices for performance management***

- ☐ Make it about the job NOT the person. Focus on how the behavior is negatively impacting the work.
- ☐ Be clear about the problem, its impact, any expectations, and the consequences if the problem isn't fixed.
- ☐ Document, document, document.
- ☐ Follow-up – hold people accountable by regularly checking in with the individual.

#### ***How to prepare for the conversation***

- ☐ Identify the problem – what is the issue and how does it impact the library, the public, and other staff?
- ☐ Take their perspective – consider why the person is behaving this way. Is it because of factors outside of their control – lack of training or need for an accommodation to perform the work? Or is it because they don't have the skills or need to change their behavior?
- ☐ Identify your desired outcomes for the conversation – what do you want to have happen as a result of this discussion? Be honest about what you really want. You don't want a blind spot to derail the conversation.
- ☐ Identify the consequences – what is going to happen if things don't change?
- ☐ Consider their response – how do you think they will respond? How will you respond? Avoid scripting your conversation. An outline is helpful, but a script can keep you from having a productive conversation.
- ☐ Take care of yourself. Know what helps you lessen the stress and plan on following that regimen before the conversation. Try to eat well and get a good night's sleep the night before the conversation.
- ☐ Create a better setting – don't schedule too many meetings before or after this conversation. Identify where you are going to have the conversation and who (if anyone) is going to be with you during the conversation. Set up the room to match your desired outcomes. Make sure you have coverage for the library, so you and the employee can take some time to decompress after the conversation.

# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



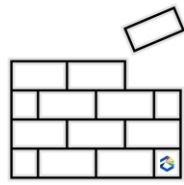
## ***What to do during the conversation***

- ☐ Set the tone – open the conversation in a way that aligns with your desired outcomes. Consider the individual. Some people will respond better to a friendly conversation. Others will want you to get right to the point.
- ☐ Be clear and kind – describe the problem, the impact, and what you need from the individual. Using the sandwich method – placing the negative feedback between praise – rarely gives you the results you need.
- ☐ Listen, listen, listen – in most cases the employee should be doing most of the talking. Your job is to listen, ask questions, redirect (especially if they are blaming everyone else), and help them get to a solution.
- ☐ Summarize what was discussed, decided, and next steps. This conclusion helps you and the employee remember the most important points.
- ☐ If needed, end the conversation early. If things are unproductive and/or the employee is struggling with the news, politely end the conversation. Offer them time to recover and let them know that you will follow up with another meeting.

## ***What to do after the conversation***

- ☐ Take care of yourself and breathe. These conversations can be stressful. Take a quick walk and/or some alone time to decompress.
- ☐ If needed, give the employee time to decompress. Depending on the nature of the feedback, the employee may need the afternoon off. If the employee is upset, giving them time to recover is in everyone's best interest.
- ☐ Send a follow-up email that summarizes the conversation. It should outline the problem, the impact, what the employee and any others (including yourself) are going to do to resolve the problem, and what the consequences are if the problem is not resolved.
- ☐ Hold yourself and the person accountable. Be sure to follow-up with the employee on the agreed upon schedule. If they aren't addressing the problem, follow through on the consequences.

# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

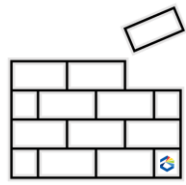


## ***Reflection questions for performance management conversations***

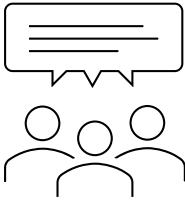
Identify a situation where you need to give negative feedback.

- ☐ What is the problem? What is the person doing or not doing, and why is that a problem? Who does it impact, and how does it impact them?
- ☐ Why do you think the person is behaving this way? What external factors might be at play – lack of knowledge, lack of understanding, other people's behaviors, or something else?
- ☐ What do you want to have happen as a result of this conversation? What would success look like?
- ☐ What are the consequences if things don't change?


# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## OPEN MEETINGS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Board meetings -- they're open to the public, and the public is a-talkin'!

Get a refresher on Open Meeting Law and learn best practices around public comment, then apply it in scenarios.

Corey Sloan and Cara Orban

Uh-oh

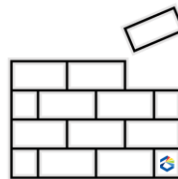
Good to  
Know

Find Out  
More

We Do  
This Well

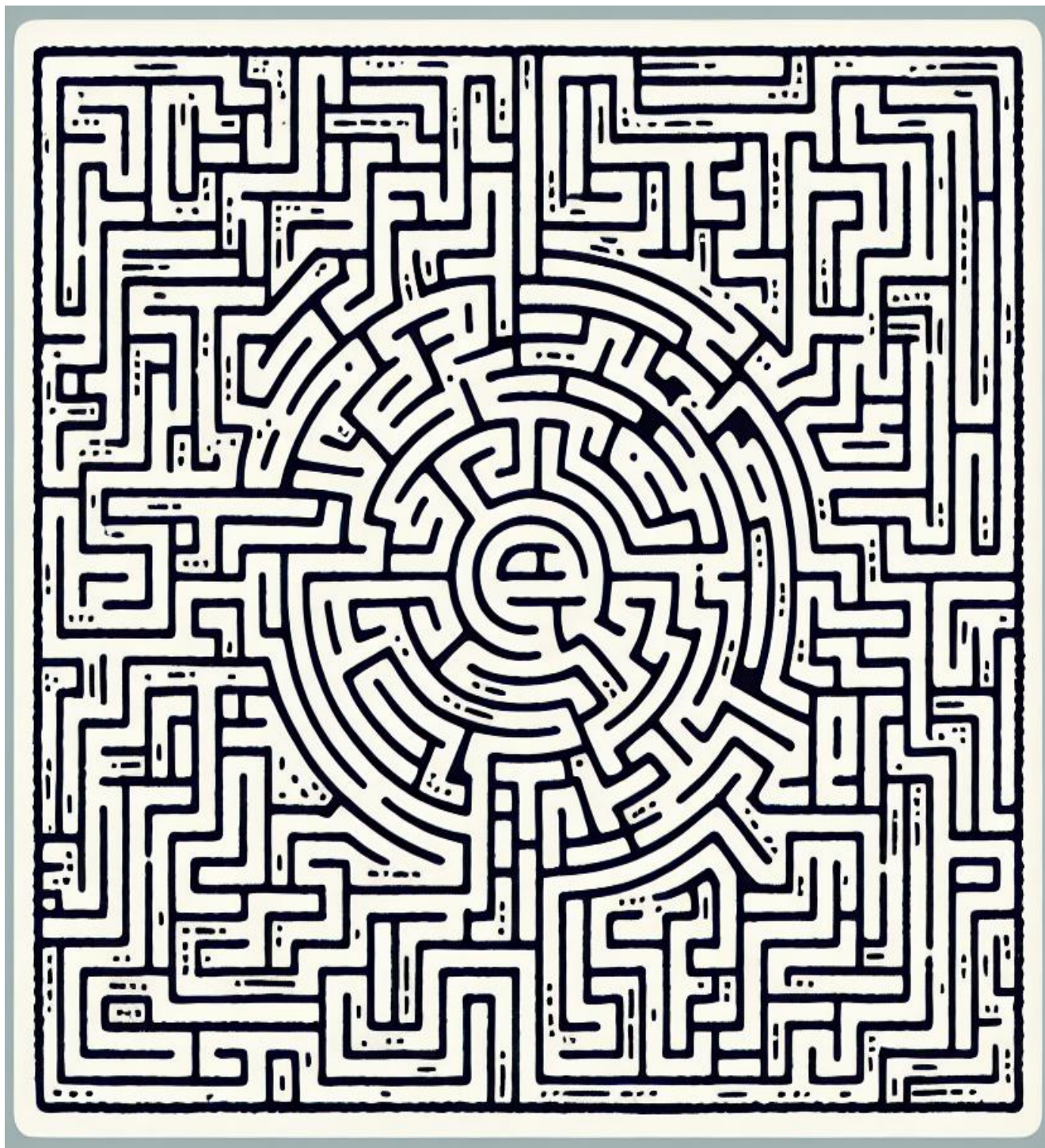


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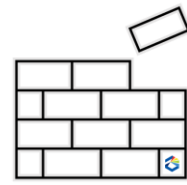
## AFTERNOON CONNECTIONS

2:45 – 3:00 Break Time to Connect with Colleagues





# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## AFTERNOON PLENARY SESSION

3:00-4:30

### THE POWER OF NARRATIVE – STORYTELLING FOR LIBRARY LEADERS

This session will equip participants with essential storytelling skills, empowering them to articulate the profound value and community impact of their libraries.

#### The Critical Need for Compelling Library Stories -

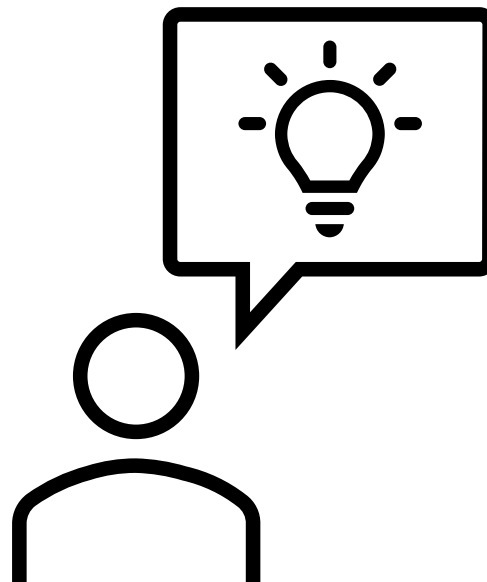
In an increasingly competitive landscape for resources and attention, the ability to effectively communicate the unique contributions of public libraries is paramount. Library directors are not just administrators; they are advocates, visionaries, and community connectors. To secure funding, engage stakeholders, and foster deeper community relationships, they need more than just statistics; they need compelling narratives.

This workshop addresses a critical need: to instill in library leaders the confidence and practical skills to share powerful stories about:

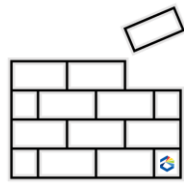
- **Public Value Creation:** How their libraries tangibly improve lives, foster literacy, and provide essential services.
- **Community Connection:** How libraries truly understand and respond to the specific needs and values of their local communities.

By honing their storytelling abilities, librarians can transform abstract concepts of "public service" into relatable, impactful human experiences, demonstrating the indispensable role their institutions play in Montana's communities. This confidence in narrative will enable them to advocate more effectively, build stronger partnerships, and ensure their libraries continue to thrive as vital community hubs.

Marc Moss



# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## END OF DAY PLENARY SESSION

4:30 - 5:00

### REFLECTION AND SHARING ACTIVITY

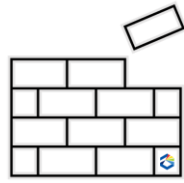
#### SILENT BINGO!

We've had a long day of talking and interacting. For a challenge, try to find people without talking. You can use gestures, notes, mime, whatever it takes without a sound!

Find someone who

Has the same number of years working with or in libraries	Has worked in an academic library	Loves to do children's programming	Plays an instrument or plays in a band
Has recently read the same book	Has worked the circulation desk the day after a holiday weekend	Has lived overseas	Has a tattoo
Knits, quilts or crochets	Has an unusual pet	Likes breakfast for dinner	Is retiring in the next five years
Had a different profession before coming to libraries	Has never worn a cardigan	Moved to Montana from another state	Lives in their home town

# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 16

### OPENING PLENARY

9:00 – 10:30

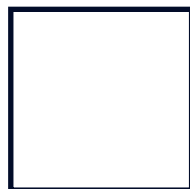
#### RELEASING CONTROL AND RECLAIMING YOUR AGENCY

We are wired for a lot of things in life, but we are definitely wired for control. We like to be in control. Even the most spontaneous and carefree among us like the control of not being controlled! But our desire for control can actually keep us stuck not pursuing what we really want in life, trying to change people that won't change, and anxious about the many things we can't control. We can find more freedom, confidence, and peace when we learn to detach from other people's approval and expectations of us, self-doubt, and trying to change people and systems that are out of control. When we learn to detach, we can then step into the power of our own agency to create the life we want, increase our resilience, and invest our energy and time into living in such a way that brings fulfillment and purpose.

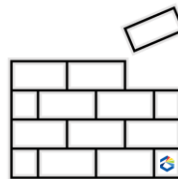
Mazi Robinson

1. Draw a Let Them column and Let Me column. List people and situations in your life where you need to Let Them. Next to that, list your Let Me move.
2. Which people and situations in your life is it harder to release control? Why do you think that is?
3. Where at work, specifically, do you need to Let Them, Let Me? What would that look like?
4. Draw a 1 inch by 1 inch box and write the names of the people whose opinion matters in your life. What is it about these people that they have this role in your life?

Let Them	Let Me



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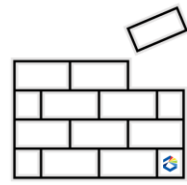


## MORNING CONNECTIONS

**10:30-10:45** Break Time to Connect with Colleagues

A large graphic of a brick wall with a blue circular logo in the bottom right corner. The wall is composed of several rows of bricks, with a blue circular logo in the bottom right corner. A tilted rectangular box is positioned above the wall.

# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION

**10:45-12:00**

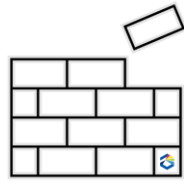
### FROM LEARNING TO ACTION: CONNECTING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Sessions at this year's fall workshop have focused on communication, storytelling, and the internal work that helps us build strong relationships. Let's apply what we have learned by creating an action plan for connecting with local government officials. Attendees will focus on their unique community and what they want to achieve.

Tracy Cook

Reflection questions for local government session	Your Response
What do you want to achieve? Why? How do you think it will help?	
Which local government official(s) can help you achieve your goal? Why do you think they are the best person? What do you know about what that person values or is trying to achieve?	
What's your vision?	
What conditions need to exist to achieve that vision?	
What actions do you need to take to create the conditions?	
Who can help you?	
What skills or behaviors have you learned that could be used to take action?	
What is 1 concrete thing you can do when you get home?	

# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## PLENARY SESSION AND LUNCH 12:00-1:30

### IT'S ABOUT TIME! EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO MANAGE YOUR LIFE AND YOUR TIME

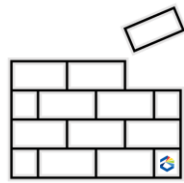
Do you ever feel you are rushing from one appointment to the next? Does your to-do list seem to grow throughout the day rather than shrink? Do you ever wish there were more than 24 hours in the day? When we feel that our lives and schedules are out of control, we feel stressed and overwhelmed. Everyone has 24 hours in a day. How are you going to spend your “24”? Learning to manage your time so that it doesn’t manage you is the first step in using your “24” more effectively and living a life that reflects your priorities, goals, and values.

Mazi Robinson

#### Reflection

- What are some items on your “Things I Don’t Do” and “Things I Do” lists?
- What keeps you from putting things on your “Things I Don’t Do” list?
- Do you experience decision fatigue? How does it impact your daily life?
- Do you know the seasons and rhythms of your life? What are some small steps you can take to plan your schedule/commitments around those seasons and rhythms?


# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



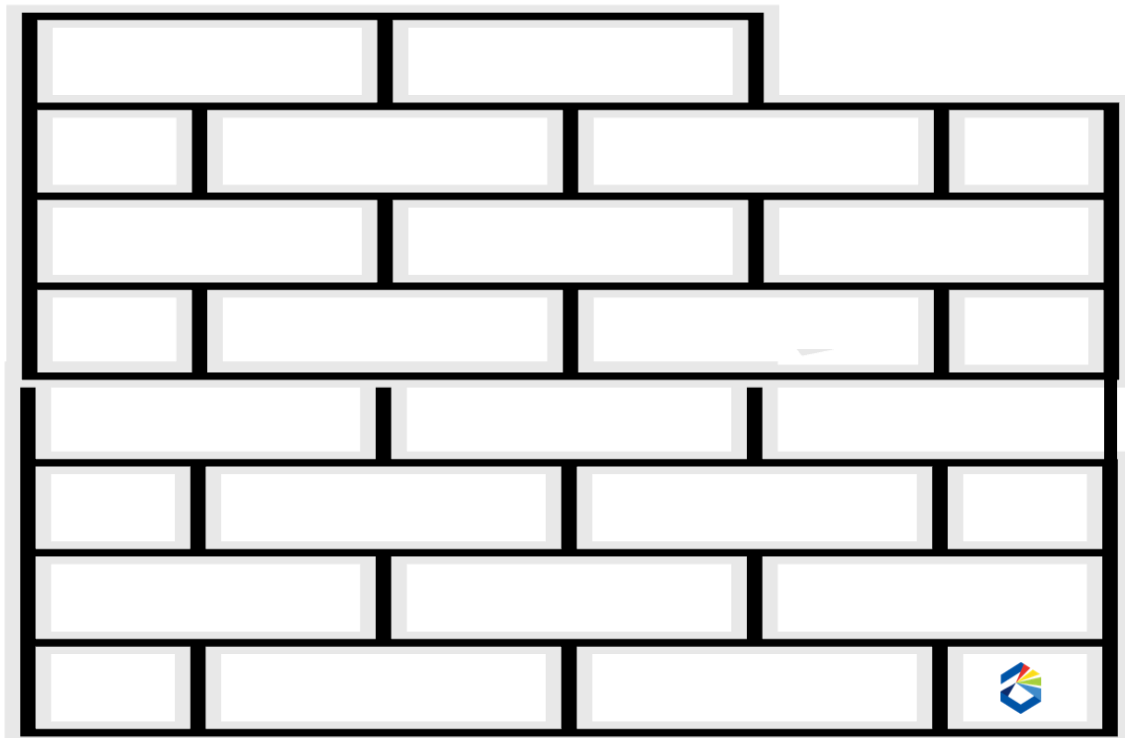
## CLOSING SESSIONS

1:30 – 2:30

### MSL WAGON WHEEL

Each MSL Program will be available to share information and answer questions as attendees move around the room.

MSL Consulting	Lifelong Learning	Continuing Education	Montana History Portal	Data and Reporting	Montana Shared Catalog
Tracy Cook, Cara Orban, Corey Sloan	Bobbi DeMontigny	Colet Bartow	Jennifer Birnel	Rebekah Kamp	Amy Marchwick





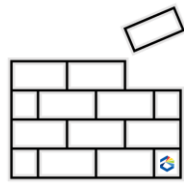
## REFLECTIONS, PLANNING, EVALUATION

Foundations	Next Level	Level Up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I learned</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I can do this</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I'm going to</li></ul>

Please submit an evaluation for individual sessions you attend and for the workshop as a whole. We need your feedback to help us provide the best possible learning experience. Each speaker appreciates hearing from you about their work.



# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## SPEAKER BIOS

### MAZI ROBINSON, MS, LPC, CPCS, NCC

Mazi is a licensed professional counselor and speaker specializing in helping individuals discover their true voice as they navigate self worth/self esteem challenges, relationship concerns, and life stage transitions.

In addition to her work as a therapist, Mazi maintains an active speaking schedule presenting workshops on topics such as anxiety, self-worth, healthy relationships, communication, personal growth, and leadership.

Mazi is the Founder and Director of Cultivate. Through its counseling center and community gatherings, Cultivate encourages women to cultivate joy, courage, and freedom in their lives as they pursue emotional, relational, and spiritual health.

Mazi resides in Atlanta, GA with her husband and two sons. She loves a good deep dive into random current events, getaways with her family, and dinner on a porch with friends.



### MARC MOSS

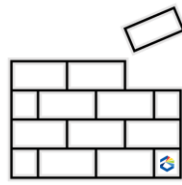


Tell Us Something Founder and Executive Director Marc Moss was professionally trained as an English educator, certified in 1995 to teach English 7-12 in the state of Ohio. He went on to teach in the world's best classroom, Yellowstone National Park, as a seasonal ranger-naturalist from 1997-2001, telling the stories of the geothermals there, the ecology of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the historical Fort Yellowstone.

Upon arriving in Missoula, Marc experienced formal personal storytelling for the first time at a live storytelling event at the PEAS Farm in Missoula, MT, and has been cultivating personal storytelling in Missoula in some fashion ever since.

He brings his expertise in storytelling to recruiting storytellers and to the story coaching workshops that he requires of each storyteller before each Tell Us Something event.

# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## TRACY COOK

Tracy Cook is the Lead Consulting and Learning Librarian at the Montana State Library. She assists public and tribal college libraries with board trainings, strategic plan facilitation, and answering questions about a wide variety of topics. She enjoys helping libraries find ways to partner with local governments, non-profits, and private business to improve life for community members. When not at work Tracy can be found outside hiking, cross-country skiing, and enjoying Montana's beautiful landscape.



## CARA ORBAN

Cara is a consultant with the Montana State Library, providing support to directors and boards in the administrative work of running a library so that they can successfully fulfill their libraries' mission. Prior to working at the State Library, Cara's library jobs included shelver, circulation clerk, reference librarian, and digital collections manager. Her non-library jobs included pizza delivery driver, cashier, fast food cook, waitress, bookstore clerk, art class assistant, and dishwasher. These various work experiences helped shape her appreciation for purpose-driven leadership, cooperation, communication skills, and empathy. Cara lives in Helena with her family.



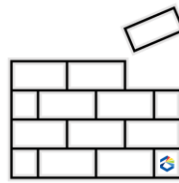
## COREY SLOAN

Corey is a public librarian turned MSL consultant with a background in programming, customer service, and mobile libraries. Her passions in librarianship center around community building, outreach, services to underserved populations, and intergenerational programming. A highlight of consulting for her is getting to know different communities in Montana and how they use their libraries, and supporting new and emerging ideas. She offers trainings for library directors and trustees and enjoys helping problem solve, build camaraderie, and develop leadership skills. When not focusing on libraries Corey is hopefully outside adventuring, dipping in a body of water, listening to live music, creating something interesting, or reading (of course).

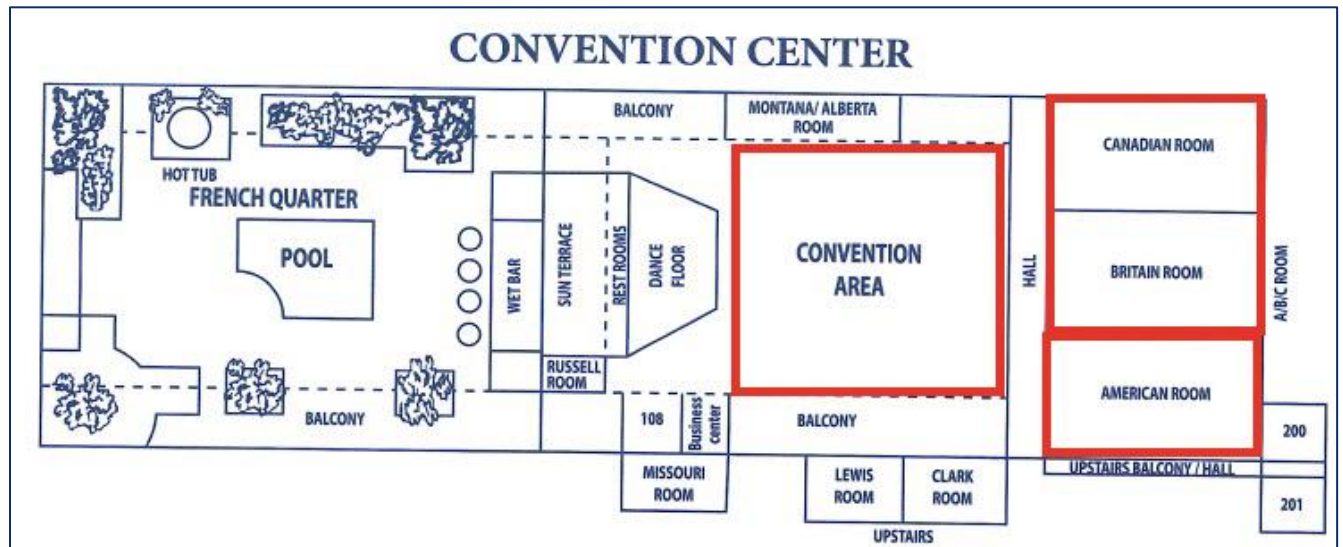


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# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## HERITAGE INN MAP



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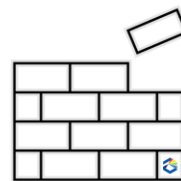


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# LIBRARY LEADERS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



## SCHEDULE-AT-A-GLANCE

Monday September 15	Session Details	Room
9:00-10:30	<i>Welcome and Opening</i> Being Brave in the Everyday	Britain/Canadian
10:30-10:45	Break Time to Connect with Colleagues	
11:00-12:00	Braving the Pathway to Excellence	Britain/Canadian
	Being an Effective Board	American
12:00-1:30	Can't We All Just Get Along?: Integrating Boundaries and Kindness in Our Relationships	Convention Area
1:45- 2:45	Navigating Performance Conversations with Grace	Britain/Canadian
	Open Meetings and Public Engagement	American
2:45 – 3:00	Break Time to Connect with Colleagues	
3:00-4:30	The Power of Narrative – Storytelling for Library Leaders	Britain/Canadian
4:30 - 5:00	<i>Reflection and Sharing Activity</i>	Britain/Canadian

Tuesday September 16	Session Details	Room
9:00 – 10:30	Releasing Control and Reclaiming Your Agency	Britain/Canadian
10:30-10:45	Break Time to Connect with Colleagues	
10:45-12:00	From learning to action: connecting with local government officials	Britain/Canadian
12:00-1:30	It's About Time! Effective Strategies to Manage Your Life and Your Time	Convention Area
1:30 – 2:30	MSL Wagon Wheel	Britain/Canadian
2:30 – 3:00	<i>Reflections, Planning, Evaluation</i>	American