

Report to COLAND on activities in support of the Strategic Vision for 21st Century Library Systems - Kathy Pletcher, March 12, 2015

Meeting with Superintendent Tony Evers

On February 12 a group representing COLAND, the Lean Study Group, and DPI staff met with Superintendent Tony Evers to present the Strategic Vision for 21st Century Library Systems and the Road Map for implementing the vision. The Superintendent was complimentary of the visioning process and the results and he encouraged COLAND to pursue funding options to support the Road Map process and timeline for a transparent and inclusive process to work toward the strategic visions approved by COLAND in January 2015 and also toward efficient and effective service delivery models to provide the best services possible for all libraries and patrons. In his welcoming remarks at Library Legislative Day on February 17, Superintendent Evers praised the work of COLAND and the Lean Group and called for the library community to work together to build a strong future for library services to Wisconsin communities.

Inquiries with Governor and Legislative Leaders

At the January 9 COLAND meeting it was agreed that representatives of COLAND (Nita, Kathy, M.T., Tom and Jess) would explore the possibility of a budget request to fund the Road Map. The first inquiry was to the Governor's Office to determine if the Governor would consider adding the funding to his budget. We learned that the Governor's budget was no longer open to amendments as it was being finalized to introduce to the Legislature on February 2. Our next step was to have conversations with several Republican Leaders to seek advice on a possible budget request through the Joint Finance Committee process. A delegation of COLAND representatives and several librarians met with Speaker Vos and Senator Wanggaard on February 17 to discuss the Vision and Road Map and seek advice for possible funding options. Speaker Vos was complimentary regarding the Lean analysis and the Vision toward more efficient and effective service delivery models. While he would not support full funding he made several suggestions to us: a) self-funding; b) matching funding; and c) a no interest loan which could be paid back from the savings achieved through service redesign. In conversations with Representatives Nygren and Kooyenga we heard that our ideas were good but that the budget is very tight and many groups are trying to restore funding that had been cut by the Governor, ie. public schools and the UW. In order to pursue a JFC budget request COLAND would have to have budget language ready to present to members of the JFC and gain support from the 12 Republican members of the committee. This would have to be accomplished in the next several weeks because the JFC budget process is moving along with public hearings in March.

Next steps

In my judgement, attempting to pursue a budget request in this difficult budget cycle is not a wise option. I think we should take a step back to review the Road Map timeline and budget and explore funding models that are more viable. This would preserve our political capital and provide more time to work through the implementation process with library systems and the library community.