

Proposed Recommendations of the Libraries and Service Delivery Consultant Work Group

Increasing Access to Emerging Electronic Services

To ensure that all Minnesotans have equitable access to e-content collections that fill recreational and academic needs and help to close the achievement gap, the Consultant Group recommends:

- A-1 Funds for a statewide collection of e-books, administered by State Library Services and supporting school curricula, academic standards and K-12 literacy. State facilitation of a Minnesota e-book collection, bring together a statewide consortia arrangement with 3M.
- A-2 Minnesota Department of Education support for statewide efforts to ensure all Minnesota residents and businesses have access to high speed broadband.
- A-3 Funds for a statewide platform to host locally created e-content focused on Minnesota's cultural heritage.
- A-4 Increased funding and expansion of Electronic Library for Minnesota (ELM) and MnLINK; exploration of additional statewide e-services, such as e-books.

Increasing Service Delivery and Collaboration

To ensure the availability of interlibrary loan and the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library services independent of the availability of federal funds, the Consultant Group recommends:

- B-1 Full state-funding for interlibrary loan and delivery, through Minitex.
- B-2 Full state-funding for the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library.

To ensure that the maximum available resources are available to support student success and close the achievement gap, the Consultant Group recommends:

- B-3 State funds for incentives and/or grant programs that support partnerships between public libraries and school districts focused on reducing summer learning loss, enhancing college knowledge, providing year-round free meals for at-risk children, etc.

Standardizing access to library resources across types of libraries may increase the ways in which residents can access library content and services. The Consultant Group recommends:

- B-4 A statewide library card/passport that works at any type of library and for any type of library service, physical or electronic.

Options for Changing Current Library Procedures and Governance Systems

Given the complexity of Minnesota's library structures and the need to leverage limited state and local financial resources, the Consultant Group recommends:

- C-1 Study and assess inequity in city-county funding of libraries.
- C-2 Formation of a task force with representation from all pertinent groups, the task force would be charged with examining existing situations, identifying unique challenges and collaboratively identifying ways to address major challenges. Engage an independent consultant to determine how library services can best be delivered and to recommend changes that could range from dismantling the existing structures and creating new structures to recommending modifications to existing structures.
- C-3 A detailed study of whether or not twelve regional library and seven multicounty multitype organizations serve the current and future needs of Minnesotans, with an eye toward standardization of the organizations' joint powers agreements.
- C-4 Review of the current regional library system structure to streamline and consolidate for efficiency and better service.

Standards and benchmarks for the performance of public and school libraries ensure that library patrons receive at least minimum levels of service. Standards also define what every citizen can expect from a library. The Consultant Group recommends that:

- C-5 State Library Services support equitable access for every K-12 student to a school library that has appropriate resources, programming and certified staff; and State Library Services employ a staff member with expertise in school library media programs.
- C-6 State Library Services create benchmarks for school library media centers that allow staff and administrators the ability to measure school library performance and teaching in relation to standards and student outcomes.
- C-7 State Library Services, in collaboration with stakeholders, create standards for public libraries that address minimum levels for participation in library systems and statewide services and the establishment of basic standards including but not limited to: education of staff, quality of collections, and status of and access to technology.
- C-8 Roles and responsibilities for library services at state, regional and local levels be more clearly defined, including determination of what entity is responsible for what types of service delivery and how entities are funded.
- C-9 A Minnesota Department of Education-endorsed statewide Plan for Better Libraries that articulates the role of libraries in early learning, education, lifelong learning and economic development. The Plan would articulate a vision and mission for Minnesota's libraries and articulate key services, funding expectations and standards.

By statute, State Library Services provides “advice and guidance” to libraries. To strengthen its role, the Consultant Group recommends:

- C-10 Review of State Library Services’ statutory responsibilities as defined in Minnesota Statutes 134 to determine what needs to be added, changed or strengthened so that it has the authority to serve in a leadership and developmental role for all types of libraries.

Participation in regional public library systems is required for public libraries to benefit from most state funding. Multicounty multitype systems are a mechanism for coordinating activities between types of libraries, and have a particular focus on school library media centers. At the same time, there are differences in how regional library systems are funded and organized. There are also differences in services provided to member libraries.

To better support regional systems, the Consultant Group recommends:

- C-11 Increase in the amount of Regional Library Basic System Support and a change in the distribution formula to ensure equity of funding across the state.
- C-12 Increase in Regional Library Basic System Support to the level needed by libraries, including library automation systems as specified in service agreements.
- C-13 Revision of the Regional Library Basic System Support formula completed by a neutral third party.

Next Steps

The commissioner must report by February 1, 2015, to the education policy and finance committees of the legislature on how to structure library systems to ensure that all Minnesota residents have equitable and cost-effective access to state-supported library services.