

NICE (Northern Wisconsin ILS Consortium Exploration)

Team Report - November 2022

Project Background/Review

Northern Waters Library Service (NWLS) and Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) have a history of looking for ways of partnering with other library systems. One example is our technology partnership. In 2013 NWLS, WVLS and IFLS investigated the possibility of merging into one Integrated Library System consortium with Project WIN. Both NWLS and WVLS are going through the process of exploring ILS options. NWLS and WVLS staff started talking about the possibility of working together and if a shared ILS could be cost effective and improve services to both libraries and to patrons.

NWLS and WVLS applied for an LSTA Grant to fund this project. NWLS and WVLS staff requested multiple project proposals from consultants and selected WiLS as a consultant to assist with the exploration project. WiLS Staff Melody Clark, Melissa McLimans and Kim Kiesewetter will be working closely with staff from NWLS and WVLS throughout the exploration process.

An Exploration Team has been formed, and met for the first time on October 25, 2022 to discuss project goals/outcomes and project timeline. Regular meetings are scheduled for the third Tuesday of each month from 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.

NICE Team Members

- Alexander Johnson, Marathon County Public Library Support Services Manager
- Gina Rae, NWLS Database and Support Specialist
- Jackee Johnson, NWLS ILS Administrator
- Katie Zimmermann, WVLS ILS Administrator
- Molly Lank-Jones, Hayward Library Director
- Peggy O'Connell, Minocqua Library Director
- Rachel Metzler, WVLS Database and Support Specialist
- Sue Heskin, Superior Library Director
- Tammie Blomberg, Rib Lake Library Director
- Teresa Schmidt, Mercer Library Director

Project Goals/Outcomes

This is, in many ways, a feasibility study that will uncover and document potential advantages and disadvantages of an ILS merger and is not a decision-making process. It will result in:

- A clear understanding of financial implications
- A clear understanding of benefits for patrons, member libraries, and other stakeholders including and tools for directors to share with their boards throughout the process
- A final report detailing outcomes, benefits, concerns, etc. that contains an executive summary of key findings

- An examination of existing cultures of individual systems/libraries (how they work together- is everyone involved, committees, etc.)
- Articulated priorities and values of stakeholders and an examination of where they overlap
- Identification of gaps in knowledge (how the systems are already collaborating and awareness of this)
- Exploration of existing governance structures and recommendations for future structure(s)
- Successful delivery of the research grant goals (from the LSTA Grant Application) to the best of the team and consultant's ability.

Project Timeline/Process Overview

Phase I: Development of Foundational Principles (November-December 2022)

- The development and approval of a process communication plan
- The development and approval of shared principles for the process
- The start of information gathering, focused on past ILS merger efforts, to inform this process

Phase II: Information gathering (December 2022 - April 2023)

- Review of past efforts to merge ILS consortia including Project WIN
- Review of ILS budgets
- Research into other consortium and shared ILS mergers
- Stakeholder survey
- Focus group meetings
- Identify key themes from the data and information gathered

Phase III: Report Creation (May 2023 through June 2023)

This phase will focus on the development of a final report that will identify concerns and barriers to a merged ILS, benefits of a merged integrated library system, and the conditions that make a merged ILS desirable.

Report prepared by K. Zimmermann and J. Johnson on 11/09/2022