

April 13, 2017

Dear PLSR Steering Committee,

The twenty-four libraries of the Bridges Library System have been following the PLSR process. While we appreciate the abundance of communication and process, it is our view that a crucial step has been skipped. The libraries, library systems, and other stakeholders have not been asked about the problems they see with the current structure and what has been working particularly well. **The benefits and limitations of the current model need to be identified and understood in order to make informed decisions.**

The goal of the PLSR process as stated on its website is “to develop a plan for implementation of new models of service.” **We believe the goal should be “to develop a plan for implementation of improved models of service.”** That may lead to entirely new models of service or improvements to existing models.

Libraries were recently asked to complete two surveys from topic teams. The surveys lacked context, the questions were biased or vague, and they contained no option for general comments. Instead of compiling data on the current state of the effectiveness of system-provided services and the best way to make improvements, the survey presumed an appropriate model without defining the problem that it was attempting to solve.

PLSR’s post of March 30 indicates that the steering committee has already decided on a new model: “statewide coordination of services with regional field offices carrying out most of the service.” To the best of our knowledge, libraries have not been supplied data or meeting minutes that support this decision. This appears to be contrary to PLSR’s stated goal to be transparent. Additionally, the terms “statewide coordination of services” and “regional field offices” have not been defined that we know of and, if indeed the workgroups have recommended that model, we don’t know how each group is defining those terms or whether their definitions align with those of the steering committee.

Alliance of Public Librarians

*representing the
libraries of:*

Big Bend
Butler
Brookfield
Delafield
Eagle
Elm Grove
Fort Atkinson
Hartland
Jefferson
Johnson Creek
Lake Mills
Menomonee Falls
Mukwonago
Muskego
New Berlin
North Lake
Oconomowoc
Palmyra
Pewaukee
Sussex
Waterloo
Watertown
Waukesha
Whitewater

The benefits we receive from our library system under the current model are many:

- Extensive personalized assistance predicated on knowledge of our libraries and our communities
- Effective management of ILS, shared database systems, and cooperative purchasing
- Efficient delivery services
- Wealth of professional development opportunities
- Funding for start-up or innovative services that benefit libraries regardless of size
- Marketing targeted to local communities
- Strong leadership for youth and inclusive services
- Mentorship for new and seasoned directors
- Financial stability to ensure long-term success
- Engaged local library system board for maximum accountability and essential advocacy efforts

Not only does the Bridges Library System meet and exceed our expectations as individual libraries, it has been [recognized](#) outside the library community by the *Public Policy Forum of Wisconsin* as an example of data-driven decision-making and effective intergovernmental leadership.

We are perplexed as to why PLSR has settled on an untried new model instead of fixing those parts of the current model which are not working well for some. This is akin to having a car with one flat tire and three working tires and deciding that the solution is to get a boat.

In summary, we urge the steering committee to redirect the process to focus on the benefits and limitations of the current model, which need to be identified and understood in order to make informed decisions. Only after these assessment activities are completed can PLSR move forward on proposing an appropriate model of service.

Sincerely,
Alliance of Public Librarians, Bridges Library System

Karla Lang, Big Bend Village Library
Edell Schaefer, Brookfield Public Library
Gail Duernberg, Butler Public Library
Stephanie Ramirez, Delafield Public Library
Allie Chase, Alice Baker Memorial Library
Sarah Muench, Elm Grove Public Library
Kelly TerKeurst, Dwight Foster Public Library
Nancy Massnick, Hartland Public Library
Leann Lehner, Jefferson Public Library
Luci Bledsoe, Johnson Creek Public Library
Gerard Saylor, L.D. Fargo Public Library
Karol Kennedy, Menomonee Falls Public Library

Angie Zimmermann, Mukwonago Comm. Library
Pete Loeffel, Muskego Public Library
Barbara Draeger, New Berlin Public Library
Cheryl Schoenhaar, Town Hall Library
Betsy Bleck, Oconomowoc Public Library
Laura Gest, Powers Memorial Library
Jennie Stoltz, Pewaukee Public Library
Kathy Klager, Pauline Haass Public Library
Kelli Mountford, Karl Junginger Memorial Library
Peg Checkai, Watertown Public Library
John Klima, Waukesha Public Library
Stacey Lunsford, Irvin L. Young Memorial Library