



## MEMO

**To:** Montana State Library Commission  
**From:** Jennie Stapp, State Librarian and Tracy Cook, Lead Consulting Librarian  
**Subject:** Federation Study Recommendations  
**Date:** May 9, 2023

At the recommendation of the study task force and the Network Advisory Council (NAC), staff request the Commission adopt the Federation Study recommendations to:

- Budget an additional \$4,000 for each federation to be used for cooperative projects. (Note, the total amount, \$24,000 is included in the Federations Project in the FY2024 budget included in Commission meeting materials. If adopted, this recommendation brings the total budget for federations to \$249,000 per year).
- Authorize staff to begin an administrative rules process to update the federation administrative rules of Montana. (Note, a draft copy of proposed rule changes is included in Commission materials. The process will include public input and legal review before the Commission will act on the revised rules).

### Background:

A review of Montana Code governing Montana Library Federations is online here: [20221006101243\\_22086.pdf \(mt.gov\)](https://legis.mt.gov/bills/2022/20221006101243_22086.pdf).

Beginning in the late summer of 2022, the Montana State Library and a task force of librarians, a library board member, and Commissioner Hall, studied the structure and purpose of current federations to consider whether the legislative intent created when federations were established is still valid. They also considered how well the federation structure meets the needs of Montanans and Montana's libraries. In addition to review by the NAC, staff shared the recommendations with federation members at their spring meetings. People have been supportive of the recommendations.

### Highlights from the study include:

- The role of federations is to provide regional support and professional development for board members and librarians. They also play a critical role in providing stable funding for library services.
- Education on the role of federations, their history, and the authority given to libraries within federation boundaries will be helpful.
- Board members are critically important to the success of local libraries and to assisting with improving library services regionally. Their ideas and perspective as community



members enriches conversations about library services and challenges. Federations are one of the best ways to include them and connect them. Federation coordinators and MSL staff should continue to support board members and work to make federation meetings and training valuable for board members.

- There is archaic language in the administrative rules of Montana and within individual federation bylaws that should be updated.
- The task force did not see the need for a significant amount of funding to go to federations. They are requesting an additional \$4,000 for each federation to be used for cooperative projects.



# Federation Task Force Recommendations

## Background information about task force

[Federation Task Force](#) – Charge of the task force was to review the federation structure to determine if it still met library needs and to make recommendations on any needed changes.

## Value of library federations and library needs addressed

The role of federations is to provide regional training and networking opportunities. The funding that comes with federations is critical for library success. Federations address the library need for stable funding and well-informed library board members, directors, and staff.

## Need for education about federations, the role of trustees, budgeting, and reporting processes

The task force recognized that some of the challenges of federations may be due to a lack of knowledge about the purpose of federations, the role of board members, and the processes for budgeting and reporting.

They recommend State Library staff and/or federation coordinators lead the following educational efforts for library directors, board members, and staff:

- Share a federation history video that explains the history and role of federations.
- Create a short one-page document that describes federations and their purpose.
- Lead a session at federation meetings about the power federation members have in determining use of federation funds and how the budgeting/reporting process works.
- Educate board members about running meetings and becoming involved in federations.

## Funding recommendations for federations

The federation task force recommended the following:

- Request an additional \$4,000 be awarded to each federation for federation members to use for collaborative efforts such as annual retreats or projects that benefit most federation members.
- Request federations consider asking the State Library or the Montana Library Association to ask for more funding for federations through a legislative process. The members of the federation should discuss whether they need more funding, how they would use the funding, how it would benefit Montanans, and whether they want to pursue more funding by going through a legislative process.

## Recommendations for ARM changes for federations

The federation task force recommended making the following changes to the Administrative Rules of Montana:

- Simplify the language in ARM 10.102.5102 – Allocation of funding between federations and grant programs.



- Replace the “board of trustees” language in ARM 10.102.5105 – Joining library federations - with language that focuses on the voting authority and importance of public library board members and adopting bylaws for federations.
- Update ARM 10.102.5106 to remove the references to grant funds no longer available and to reflect the current way federation funds can be used.

## Recommendations for possible changes to federation bylaws

The federation task force believes it is important for federations to adopt bylaws that reflect their unique situation. The task force recommends reviewing federation bylaws with a goal of encouraging everyone (especially board members) to participate.

Suggestions for updates to the bylaws include removal of the reference to a smaller board of trustees that is no longer used by federations, consider making it optional for a board member to chair a federation meeting, make sure that board members have voting power and are a part of the planning, voting, and reporting process.

## Next steps

State Library staff members will present these recommendations at upcoming federation meetings. Once the State Library has collected public comment and feedback, they will share the information with the task force and make changes to the recommendations, if needed.

The goal is to request additional funding and permission to initiate an Administrative Rules process at the June Montana State Library Commission meeting. If the Commission says yes, staff will lead the ARM process over the summer and fall.

## Questions for the library community

The federation task force has the following questions:

- What concerns, comments, or questions do you have about the recommendations?
- Do you agree that additional education about federations would help? What other ideas do you have for improving federations?
- The federation discussed the value of including interested tribal college libraries in the funding for federations. They recommend seeking additional funding so current libraries remain whole. What do you think of this idea?
- Do you think federations need more funding? If no, why not? If yes, what funding is needed and how would it benefit Montanans?
- The task force spent a fair amount of time talking about the role of public library board members. They believe active public library board members enrich the federation experience. What do you think about the idea of increasing involvement of public library board members? What are the challenges? What are the opportunities? What would help improve the experience of public library board members?