

The Montana State Library (MSL), in partnership with Library Strategies, proposes to launch Framing the Future: Advancing Strategic Planning for Small and Rural Libraries, an action-oriented approach to provide training in strategic planning to librarians and trustees. A grant of \$171,913 will allow MSL to create and implement a regional project with North and South Dakota, Idaho, Wyoming and Arizona, to advance rural libraries' planning efforts within a community engagement framework by 7/31/22.

### **Statement of Broad Need**

An effective strategic plan identifies community needs, particularly for under-served members of the community, and helps advance inclusive services and resources that welcome and are meaningful to residents. A good plan engages, recognizes and appreciates the diversity of these communities, including those in economically stressed areas. The need for such planning is broadly understood and promoted by national library agencies and increasingly state libraries are requiring strategic planning, but many small and rural libraries do not have the experience and capacity among their staff or leadership to undertake planning. Nor do they have the resources to do planning (or do it well). The work of the Montana State Library is to help all organizations, communities, and Montanans thrive through excellent library resources and services. MSL includes creating access to strategic planning and building capacity to conduct that training as part of its mission. Despite the awareness and commitment on the part of the state library staff and leadership, MSL has found through experience that a persistent problem exists with small libraries not recognizing the need for strategic planning, despite an emphasis on the importance of planning as promulgated by national library leadership. This project builds upon existing theories and practices of community based strategic planning. It does so by attempting to address initial resistance to strategic planning and by adding an implicit bias component that may help small and rural libraries identify and address gaps in service to certain members of their community.

### Description of the region and needs of libraries within that region

According to the Public Library Survey conducted for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, there are 406 libraries in the six states that are a part of this grant proposal. 88% of those libraries serve 25,000 or fewer people. Two thirds of the libraries serving 25,000 or fewer people are classified as rural. State Library staff in each of the six states work with these librarians on a regular basis. In their letters of support State Librarians and staff indicated support for this project because it will enable small and rural library staff to take a leadership role in shaping their institutions and communities; meet an expressed professional development need of libraries interested in planning; meet the need of small, rural libraries with few resources to create plans that will be instructive in guiding future decisions; and help libraries with limited budgets maximize limited resources.

Partner state libraries share similar demographics and see many of the same barriers for their small, rural libraries: a need for a strategic plan to guide decision making that isn't being met due to fear, lack of knowledge, or lack of resources. This project will address those barriers by offering a pre-workshop in each state focused on addressing the barriers of fear and lack of knowledge and intensive institutes that will provide trained facilitators who can lead strategic planning at zero to low cost which helps overcome the barrier of lack of resources.

Partner state libraries also recognized the need for equity, diversity, and inclusion training. Idaho and South Dakota have begun offering workshops focused on these issues. They have worked with partners in their own states. Arizona, Montana, and Wyoming are also aware of this need and have begun to explore offering these types of training for their local libraries. South Dakota reported that during one of their sessions, attendees

stated “that they never understood that they were racists in their thinking before now, but realized they were and that that bias had affected their teaching and their work in the library.” The other states in the project recognize that others might also be experiencing this implicit bias and saw a way to address implicit bias as part of the pre-workshop. The hope is that addressing implicit bias during the pre-workshop will open the minds and hearts of attendees and future facilitators thereby leading to strategic plans that address barriers and make the library truly welcoming to all members of the community.

#### Montana’s experience with small, rural libraries and why they chose to lead this effort

Ninety percent of Montana’s 82 public libraries serve fewer than 24,999 people. Of those, over half (54%) serve 5,000 or fewer people. Three State Library staff members are each assigned 1/3 of the public libraries in Montana and as part of their duties, they visit every main public library in Montana at least once a year. In the course of those onsite visits, staff members discuss challenges the library is facing; projects or services the director would like to implement; statewide initiatives and efforts where staff desire feedback from libraries that can be used to improve State Library programs and services; and questions library directors, staff members, or board members may have about providing library services, human resource issues, library law, and other library (usually Montana specific) issues. During this process, MSL staff saw that there was a need for an agreed upon plan that would help the director and board prioritize and address some of the fundamental challenges the library faces. MSL staff found resistance to the idea of strategic planning – especially planning that involved community members. Yet, in a survey asking for ideas for training for library board members the number one choice of both board members and library directors was strategic planning.

Montana’s situation is not unique. The Western Council of State Libraries is an active group and State Librarians from these states meet regularly and have forged a bond that has trickled down to their staff. Staff from the western states communicate regularly via listserv and through joint projects – usually continuing education related. When MSL and Library Strategies came up with the idea of pre-workshops to address concerns about strategic planning and intensive institutes for facilitating planning sessions, the Project Director reached out to her contacts at the other state libraries to see if this project would be valuable to them. The response was overwhelmingly positive. The Project Director continues to work with her contacts at the other states – seeking their feedback and looking for ways to make this project successful for them. This models the Montana State Library’s work with public libraries in its state. MSL has a collaborative and rich history of working across Montana. The state is large geographically, but sparsely populated and with less money than other neighboring states. That and a long history of working together has made the Montana library community realize it can do more if people compromise, listen to each other, and work together towards solutions.

MSL staff take that approach into their work with other states. Invitations were extended to seven states bordering Montana, and while initially expressing interest and acclaiming the value of the project, Washington and Oregon were not able to commit to the timing required by the grant process. In addition to Montana, the initial cohort participants include North and South Dakota, Idaho, and Wyoming. At the same time, through the network of state libraries, the Arizona State Library was investigating strategic planning for their rural libraries and asked to be included in this project.

Library Strategies is a Minnesota-based nonprofit consulting group, housed in a library foundation, that partners with library organizations nationally and internationally to cultivate their potential so that they can better serve and strengthen their communities. Created more than a decade ago, Library Strategies specializes in strategic planning, fundraising services, board development, and other activities that help libraries achieve their goals.

Recently, the State Library asked Library Strategies to lead initial strategic planning training sessions in Butte, Montana, and as a result, Valier, Missoula, and Stillwater County completed or are currently working on a strategic plan. Valier and Columbus are good examples of smaller libraries that used the training to advance strategic planning for their libraries using the Library Strategies process. Feedback from the initial sessions was positive and during the course of the evaluation, Library Strategies reached out to MSL to ask about the process and to seek feedback. From that discussion was born the idea to apply for the Framing the Future grant.

Library Strategies has led other year-long capacity-building institutes for rural libraries in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota and has experience in facing the vast array of challenges confronting these libraries, their governance and infrastructure, funding streams (or lack thereof), lack of planning, diversity/equity challenges, and other needs that make up individual library communities. Of the 54 organizations participating in these institutes over 5 years, 53 reported significant improvements in their operations and impact in an independent evaluation process.

Additionally, Library Strategies has facilitated engagement-centered strategic planning at more than 50 libraries nationwide – ranging from small libraries with service areas under 2,000 to large urban systems. These libraries report significant changes in service and resources focused directly on community, resident and user needs. Common issues addressed are inclusion/equity, community outreach, public awareness, and operational shifts toward digital resources and social gathering infrastructures. In recent years, Library Strategies has also worked with state or regional libraries to conduct train-the-trainer institutes on strategic planning – specifically focused on small and rural libraries without the capacity to hire outside consultants: Georgia, South Carolina, and south Florida. These trainings created planning cohorts specifically charged with facilitating community-focused planning processes and built regional expertise on this type of planning. Since MSL and Library Strategies had already engaged in one planning process together and Library Strategies has experience working on a statewide and regional level where other small and rural libraries were facing the same challenges, the project was determined to be at a stage where scaling up to multiple states and libraries within the Mountain and Plains region was reasonable.

This project specifically addresses key points under the Community Catalyst project category. The primary purpose of Framing the Future is to identify community opportunities and address community needs. Doing this will most likely lead to implementation of library services and programs that address many of the topics surrounding overall well-being in the community.

### **Project Design**

The three phases of the Framing the Future project include six regional workshops or pre-conference sessions; two training institutes; and remote consultation and follow up with the new trainees.

Phase 1: Four-hour regional pre-workshops will be held in each state coordinated through the state libraries in order to address the specific question of why planning, particularly community-engaged planning, is important. Led by Library Strategies and staff from MSL, these workshops will provide pre-planning and lay groundwork to energize rural library staff regarding planning. The content will include the changing nature of library work and communities; how to do planning effectively and frugally; ways libraries have benefited, including case studies; and the danger in not planning for their library's future. The workshops are customized for each participating state library in order to address their specific community needs. MSL staff and a Library Strategies consultant will meet via online conferencing software with staff members from the other 5 state libraries. This

will occur in September and October. We will identify what learning outcomes the state libraries desire from the regional pre-workshops. These learning outcomes will cover strategic planning and implicit bias. Other state library staff will be asked about the logistics of the regional workshop and what works best in terms of location, timing, and design. Those states with implicit bias and EDI partners can choose to either request assistance from that partner or they can choose to have Montana State Library staff member, Suzanne Reymer, lead the implicit bias section of the regional workshop.

There will be no cost to participate for attendees. Each of these 6 sessions will serve 25-40 people, including directors and library trustees, and be held during Fall 2020 and early Winter 2021. It is anticipated that through these pre-workshops approximately 240 library staff and trustees will gain knowledge as to the importance of community-based planning for libraries, as well as strategies to begin to address bias in their work and begin the process of laying the groundwork for planning. Every state library in the project has committed to promoting the workshops to library directors, board members, and staff. Each state will use its normal distribution method (listservs, blog posts, social media, word of mouth) to advertise the pre-workshop. Anyone may attend this session. It is open to all. The partner state libraries in this project are committed to the importance of strategic planning and overcoming barriers to library usage. Our estimates for attendance are based on the normal rates we see at the continuing education events each of us has hosted over the years.

In addition, MSL staff has contacted Western Native Voices and EmpowerMT to seek guidance from two potential partners who are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. These organizations have been asked if they can provide expertise and guidance on how to implement an implicit bias training that encourages a change in behavior. Western Native Voices and EmpowerMT will not lead workshops outside of Montana, but they are willing to lead workshops in Montana and to assist MSL staff in the design of effective implicit bias training designed to overcome barriers for under-represented groups. MSL staff has also reached out to their partner states to identify and confirm goals for which groups we need to target and to determine what partners those states have that can assist with the equity, diversity, and inclusion aspects of the project.

Phase 2: Two intensive training institutes will be offered in Billings and Missoula, Montana (on opposite sides of the state – approximately 6 hours apart), to facilitate travel from the other five states. Approximately 60 individuals who participate in the training institutes (30 per institute) will be trained to conduct strategic planning in their communities. We anticipate 8-10 individuals from Montana and 4-6 individuals from each of the other states attending the intensive institutes.

These institutes are for individual library staff to become facilitators of the Library Strategies process (Rapid Results Planning), and participants will commit to subsequently facilitate a specified number of strategic planning processes in the region for libraries other than their own. MSL staff will work with other state libraries to advertise and recruit librarians (retired and current) to attend the intensive institutes. We will encourage a geographic representation and because many of us know and work with these librarians on a regular basis, we will pinpoint individuals who have an interest and passion for this type of work. We will also open it to anyone who might be interested in order to encourage leadership development and giving back to the library community. Those interested in attending will need to complete a short application, stating why they wish to attend, confirming that they have the permission of their home institute (if applicable), and agreeing that they will facilitate at least 2 strategic planning sessions in their home state. MSL staff have successfully used this type of model in their leadership institutes and will use a similar process for this project.

The two-day, train-the-trainer, interactive institutes will feature the following sessions and activities: training overview; description of the planning model; case presentations of planning processes; step-by-step description of the planning process; role and use of surveys and other community inputs; library trends and opportunities; a mock community planning retreat; drafting a strategic plan; facilitating the implementation planning process; and “What if…” session to address potential questions and challenges in the planning process. The institutes include a handbook detailing the process and philosophy behind the planning model, including sample materials. Approximately 75 pages in length, the training materials will be produced in a format that is comprehensive and user-friendly.

Rapid Results Planning is a flexible model, built on broad and deep stakeholder engagement, with results that are energetic, collaborative, and drive the library to further meet community needs. The process is designed to be done quickly (three months from beginning to final plan) and culminates in a plan that has buy-in from a broad base of the community, making it ideal for smaller libraries. MSL has seen the results of this process, notably in Bozeman and Helena, and values the potential for the training to revitalize strategic planning and the understanding of its value across Montana and all participating states. Institute participants will emerge from the training with tools to facilitate the planning process. There will be no cost and expenses will be paid for all participants to mitigate barriers for attendance. The institutes will be held in late Spring/early Summer 2021.

Phase 3: Each of the state libraries in the project has committed to recruiting libraries who are interested in strategic planning. Montana has used a similar peer-based project for library board training and would use that model to build a scheduling and communication system for Montana facilitators. MSL will share that model with other state libraries and will answer any questions they might have. Other state libraries will be encouraged to use their own methods for recruiting libraries for strategic planning. Arizona plans to work with attendees of a Regional RIPL who expressed interest in completing strategic plans. South Dakota and Idaho have reported great interest amongst their small libraries. Montana is moving towards requiring some type of strategic planning process for its libraries. The process will try to align regional/area facilitators with the interested library. State Library staff from each state will make the initial connections, seeking to have very low travel costs. Some facilitators will most likely waive any need for travel reimbursement. The State Libraries and/or the local libraries can work together to cover any travel costs for the facilitators who need reimbursement. The facilitator and local library will also work out the details of timing and the process. State Library staff from all states who will have been trained in the process can offer assistance and answer any questions from the local library or the facilitator. This support can be given in the form of email, phone calls, or online conferencing software.

During the third tier of this project, when those trained in the process begin conducting strategic planning, Library Strategies will provide remote support to the state libraries and the participants in the institutes for a year afterward. This includes overall support and check-ins, as well as counsel to participants as they conduct their own strategic planning sessions and processes. In addition, MSL and Library Strategies will provide a listserv to keep the training cohort in contact so that the newly trained facilitators can work through problems together. Library Strategies has found with its work in training other state cohorts that the more communication among fledgling planning facilitators about their learning process, successes, and how they encounter challenges in the process, the better. This facilitation of communication, combined with support from the Library Strategies consultants and scheduled check-in points during the year, recognizes that even once staff are equipped with the tools to conduct planning, a support system is vital.

Other outputs for Framing the Future include the creation of training manuals for each state library as well as the participants, the pooling and distribution of additional materials provided by each state library geared toward strategies to recognize implicit bias, and raising awareness of additional resources available to library staff to help in their planning process such as the ALA Public Program office webinar series on how to build confidence in practicing facilitation. Another output is the digital community forum as a part of phase three, as well as an estimated 30 strategic plans conducted by participants throughout the region in the following year, with anticipated increases in the future as the importance and value of strategic planning for rural and small communities becomes an increasing priority.

Project goals include an increase in the number of strategic plans along with an increase in librarian and board member awareness about implicit bias and how that might be creating barriers for the underserved. Key success indicators for both of these goals include a strategic planning process that incorporates a broad cross-section of community members and final strategic plans that focus on ways the library can reduce barriers and/or increase services for at least one underrepresented group within the community. An impact we would like to see from this project is that quality of life for community members becomes more equal across different racial, ability, and socioeconomic status. A key success indicator would be an increase in usage of these groups and a report of satisfaction with the services. This project's assumptions include a belief that serving all people leads to better service for both minority and majority groups within the community.

This project is fairly low risk. There is a possibility that we will not have the number of participants we desire. We have been asked by area states to consider having these workshops and institutes open for others to attend, and if registration is low, we would open it up to any state that is interested. An additional risk includes push back on the implicit bias training. We have partners within Montana and the other states that can help us formulate our why up front and navigate the tricky situations that can happen when engaging in equity, diversity, and inclusion practices. The anticipated benefits of serving all people and improving the overall well-being of the community outweigh the risks. Anecdotally, state library staff in all participating states have reported an interest and a desire amongst libraries to help community members get to know one another in order to build stronger communities.

Within the states participating in the project the highest percentage minorities include those with disabilities, Latinx, Native American, and African American populations, and all of the states have significant percentages of households that are economically stressed. State Library staff from each of the states have indicated that providing better library services to those groups is an important priority. MSL staff spoke with a representative of each state to determine what that state's needs were; what capacity the state had to provide further assistance; and to uncover the names of any partners that might help with the project. MSL staff believe in being inclusive and follow-up correspondence with the other states indicates they are comfortable sharing their ideas and suggestions for the grant proposal and project. If the grant is awarded, implementation work will include the other states, Library Strategies, and the facilitators and an advisory council of librarians that advises MSL on these types of library development initiatives.

#### Evaluation process

MSL will need to follow the procurement process mandated by the state to hire an evaluator for the project. The cost estimate was based on past experience evaluating MSL projects and MSL's efforts when using Library Services and Technology Act funds through the Grants to States program. We will send our limited solicitation proposal to organizations that have experience evaluating library services. We will request that the evaluator use

our logic model for this project as a starting point for evaluating success. We will also need their assistance in determining whether or not minority groups are using the library without violating privacy.

Pre- and post-workshop session surveys will gauge participants understanding of the benefits of planning and community engagement, whether tools were shared which encouraged their participation in the next stage of training. Additionally, surveys to measure the growth of participants' knowledge in how to conduct community-focused planning, satisfaction in the tools provided, and confidence in their ability to be part of or lead a strategic planning process will be conducted. Feedback will also be solicited from participants and library staff as they conduct planning locally through phase three of the project as a part of regular check-ins by Library Strategies and MSL staff. MSL has been actively engaging in evaluation of their projects and workshops. The information we uncover leads to changes in the design of future workshops and/or the project. It often leads to other needs that should be addressed with new projects, services, or workshops.

Results of the project will be shared at various conferences. MSL shares evaluation reports and executive summaries with its State Library Commission, the broader Montana library community, and other organizations. MSL will also share the results with the partner states in case they wish to report to their funders and decision makers. Content from the project will be shared with other interested states. The Project Director is part of a Director of Library Development group that meets bi-monthly on Fridays. She can share her report and what she's learned through the listserv of the group and during those meetings. The State Librarian of Montana is an active member of the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) and can share materials with her peers. As mentioned earlier, the state libraries that are a part of Western Council are very active and connected. There are multiple ways the group communicates with one another. In addition, members of that group work with other state library agencies across the country. We will use our normal distribution methods of email, meetings, and conference presentations to share what we have learned and how the project has worked for us in case other state libraries would like to try this model.

### **Diversity Plan**

Over the course of the last year, MSL staff has been working on the Fair Library Access Resolution that was adopted by the Montana State Library Commission. This resolution states that "All Montanans will receive library services sufficient unto their needs." We believe that certain members of the community are not receiving adequate library services. We have been told by courageous tribal members that not all tribal members feel welcome at libraries. We also recognize that we have other populations who may not be receiving the services they need. MSL's goal is to work toward achievement of the needs expressed by these community members. We believe Framing the Future, especially with the changes we have made, can help us meet this goal.

MSL staff member Suzanne Reymer will be attending the August 2020 Public Library Association's Social Justice training to become a trainer in Montana in order to help people recognize their implicit bias and diversity challenges and will relay these strategies as a part of the pre-workshop sessions for Framing the Future in Montana. She will also commit to leading sessions at the pre-workshops where individual states do not already have a contact to address implicit bias and other equity, diversity, and inclusion training. Of the participating states, Idaho currently works with a specialist, Jamie Campbell Naidoo, to advance EDI at their libraries and the South Dakota State Librarian will reach out to a local tribal member who was able to help school librarians in South Dakota address issues of hidden bias.

Montana State Library staff have also begun working with the Governor's Office on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women movement. This is due to a request from our public librarians who serve tribal members and will help further develop relationships between MSL staff and tribal libraries.

Montana's demographics – from the 2017 American Community Survey – demonstrate that:

- 89% identify as white
- 6.5% as Native American
- 3.6% as Latinx
- .4% as Black
- Estimated 13.6% with a disability.

North Dakota and South Dakota report similar percentages of Native Americans, and all participating states report similar percentages of people with a disability. Idaho and Wyoming report a higher percentage of Latinx populations: 12.2% for Idaho and 9.7% for Wyoming. Arizona has the highest percentage of Latinx at 30.9%. Its Native American and African American population hovers around 4%.

MSL recognizes the need to do more groundwork to prepare library directors and board members for the tough work of seeing inherent bias and wide-ranging diversity/equity challenges and working towards addressing these issues, and that remains a goal of the organization regardless of whether we receive IMLS support for Framing the Future. An opportunity exists through this project to tie seeing one's own bias and organizational inclusion challenges with a strategic planning process that attempts to address bias and develop goals that provide services for under-represented and under-served community members. MSL has engaged diversity partners to help us improve our chances of success, such as: EmpowerMT, which works to create a more just and inclusive society by developing youth and adult leaders who work to end mistreatment, correct systemic inequalities and strengthen communities across Montana – a contracted partner – and Western Native Voice, based in Billings, MT, a non-profit, non-partisan social justice organization working to inspire Native leadership through community organizing, education, leadership, and advocacy.

Framing the Future is also focused on serving economically stressed rural areas and will endeavor to make sure staff are included who are most in need of these capacity building efforts in their communities. The American Community Survey from the Census reports the following breakdown for participating states when it comes to percentage of households with an income that is below \$25,000: Arizona: 22.3%; Idaho: 22.4%; Montana: 23.5%; North Dakota: 19%; South Dakota: 20.9%; and Wyoming: 18.7%. Rural areas in these states have higher percentages of economically stressed households, and the dimensions of rural poverty are planning and operational realities for rural library service across the region.

## **Broad Impact**

Investing in the capacity building efforts of Framing the Future will result in a multi-state professional network of library staff trained in community-based strategic planning and will sustain support for libraries seeking assistance in this area. The major impacts of a project that results in staff who are trained in authentic engagement with their communities are: 1) quality of life for community members becomes more equal across different racial, ability, and socioeconomic statuses, and 2) that libraries reaffirm their status as vital centers of rural communities. The key indicators of these impacts are an increase in usage of library services by under-



represented communities and that library users report satisfaction with services and that their needs are being met.

The goal of Framing the Future is to build greater knowledge, skills, and abilities among library staff and board members, and includes a series of outcomes that build upon each other. For the first phase of the project the outcomes are:

- Increased awareness about implicit bias and how that might be creating barriers for the underserved;
- Increased awareness about the importance of strategic planning; and
- Increased facility and confidence in seeking input from under-represented community members.

Once this increased awareness and facility have been experienced by library staff, the following key indicators will result: recognizing changes in behavior due to recognizing one's own implicit bias; half of the workshop attendees will engage in a strategic planning process for their library within 2 years of attending the session; and that library staff report including under-represented community members as part of the process.

Anticipated outcomes for the second phase of Framing the Future, the strategic planning institutes, include:

- Librarians and board members are inspired to use what they learned to engage in a strategic planning process that seeks and uses feedback from all community members;
- Public and state library staff gain knowledge and experience in facilitating a strategic planning process; and
- Librarians and board members implement their strategic plans.

The key indicators of these outcomes are that the strategic plans created identify actions to reduce barriers and increase services for at least one underrepresented group within the community, and once implemented, the plans result in reported changes in library services or policies that can be tied back to the original engagement of the community.

The third phase of Framing the Future expands this knowledge through the networks of the six participating states. Public and state library staff use their knowledge to assist libraries with strategic planning processes across this network, bolstered by support from Library Strategies, and ultimately library directors will report improved decision making due to the prioritization of the needs of their communities. More broadly speaking, this kind of engagement will lead to the increased agency and use of information by library patrons who are empowered to create and develop resources for their community.

Framing the Future has project deliverables that can be adapted for use by any number of state libraries or regional consortiums. The practice of active engagement in communities is the core of this project and can be applied across the library spectrum, along with the support tools such as the training process, manual, and pre-work steps. Documentation of the process across the three phases and the evaluation tools explained above will be provided to all participating state libraries and can be shared via state, regional, and national library conferences.

Creating and disseminating tools to engage small and rural communities is of vital importance to health of their libraries and the above ultimate outcomes are such that progress may be hard to capture in the first years following the grant. MSL is planning and committing to specific steps that will sustain the results of the grant beyond the funding period and will encourage other participating state libraries in these, as well.

Due to the Fair Library Access Resolution, Montana is committed to ensuring that all Montanans receive services. We will continue to provide funding and staff dedicated to overcoming implicit bias. MSL will continue to encourage and support strategic planning efforts and will budget funds for facilitators to provide strategic planning services. A recent task force of librarians seated by the Montana State Librarian has recommended that public libraries have a plan in order to receive state funding; we anticipate more libraries needing this assistance. Finally – the most challenging piece of this work is the implementation of a strategic plan. State Library staff have been practicing this work with their own LSTA 5-Year plan and MSL Strategic Framework. Where it makes sense, we will encourage library directors and boards to implement similar practices:

- Tying work plans or duties of the library director (in solo libraries) and staff to efforts that help meet strategic plan goals;
- Having a regular reporting process on strategic plan implementation to the board and local governments to add accountability;
- Regularly reviewing the strategic plan and discussing as a group how much progress has been made;
- Making decisions tied to a strategic planning process and saying no to things that don't fall within the plan;
- Making the document a living document by removing or adding items;
- Tying professional development opportunities to the library's strategic plan; and
- Assisting libraries with increasing library funding in order to have the necessary resources to implement their strategic plan.

Framing the Future: Advancing Strategic Planning for Small and Rural Libraries is a comprehensive project with achievable planning goals for six states providing tools that are adaptable for any number of library regions and consortiums. The strength of the proposal lies in the ultimate outcome that when rural and small libraries are equipped to successfully engage all members of their communities through planning, they will be better prepared to face the changing future of libraries and reaffirm their status as vital centers of their communities.