

NICE TEAM MEETING MINUTES

April 18, 2023

Meeting began at 8:31 am

Team Members Present: J. Johnson(NWLS), G. Rae (NWLS), K. Zimmermann (WVLS), R. Metzler (WVLS), M. McLimans (WiLS), M. Clark (WiLS), M. Lank-Jones (Hayward), P. O'Connell (Minocqua), T. Blomberg (Rib Lake), S. Heskin (Superior), T. Schmidt (Mercer).

Others Present: S. Hafemeister (WVLS)

Team Members Absent: A. Johnson

I. Full Data Review

M. McLimans (WiLS) provided an update on the Data and Information Analysis worksheet. She asked for responses/comments from the team regarding two questions on the worksheet.

Question 1 – What overarching themes or ideas are emerging using the data gathered in this process? See a summary of responses below from team members.

- Definite interest in merging
 - Overwhelmingly positive attitude about merging
 - Patrons don't understand the boundaries between two systems
- Details need to be worked out
- Patron-centered focus in responses
 - Change from Project WIN – current successful partnerships and collaborations
 - There will be some give and take in working through governance and policy details – some wins and some losses.
 - Libraries have been focusing on shared values and moving towards unified policies already
 - Could be cost savings when considering just the ILS vendor cost
 - May want to re-frame the idea that there will be cost savings and focus on better services
- In general the benefits outweigh concerns
 - The landscape has changed significantly since project WIN, and is more favorable now
 - Commitment to working together is an important first step to working out details
- Shared values of maintaining and improving the patron experience and system service to libraries

Question 2 – Based on the information gathered, do you think some form of an ILS merger is feasible? See a summary of responses below from team members. •

More feasible now than at the time of project WIN

- No reason not to move forward
- Benefits outweigh concerns
 - System staff agree on the need for collaboration
- Keeping the main goals in mind and staying patron focused as we work through policy and governance differences
- Clear and transparent communication
- Believe in merger and the potential savings, and benefits to patrons •
- No sense of pressure this time around – feels more fair to all parties •
- Much more hopeful than past efforts
 - The data gathered indicates that a merger would be good
- It is easier now to collaborate with remote meetings than it was in the past
- Libraries have been working towards standardizing and there is an openness to standardizing policies/procedures
- People are ready and staff are positive
- Important to be conscious of resistance to change and changes in funding
 - Good analysis – well prepared and presented
- Establish governing body for future to help with practices and policies •
- Other mergers have been successful and that is hopeful and helpful in this process
- Openness to change – more receptive – no reason not to move forward •
- A full merger of everything all at once may be more efficient
 - This change may be complicated, but is doable
- It is encouraging to learn new things about how each system serves libraries and exciting to think about the possibilities
- It is exciting to think of not only what might be saved, but what libraries, system staff, and patrons might gain

Additional Question - In going through this process and looking at the data, were there any points when you thought that an ILS merger might not be feasible? See a summary of responses below from team members.

- At the beginning when we were focused on details that were concerns during project WIN
- Knowing that libraries are on board makes the details more manageable •
- Overall there is a more positive attitude than in the past, with careful consideration of what we are getting into
 - Understanding our shared goals and motivations will be key to refer to

as we move forward

- The next stage will be challenging but positive
- We need a game plan for red flags moving forward, how will we keep going when we find stumbling blocks?
- There are concerns about the details surrounding concerns noted in the survey
 - A mission statement may be helpful going forward to refer back to throughout the process
 - As long as we can commit to working together and focus on shared values, we can understand concerns and find solutions

II. Decision Making Matrix / Rubric Discussion

M. McLimans (WiLS) shared a document entitled “Decision-Making Principles for Next Steps”. She asked for feedback on the draft document. Please see a summary of responses below.

- There was some concern about the use of “consistent over time” and allowing for flexibility to change
- The statements will be given more detailed explanations in the decision making matrix below
- It was noted that compromises may need to be made based on the tension of needs/priorities between different parties or ideal principles, for example:
 - Increase efficiency and effectiveness of library operations and services (patrons versus library staff)
 - Have a sustainable policy - Center on needs of libraries and patrons if possible - May compromise efficiency to get sustainable funding and cost effectiveness
- It was suggested that a statement about local library board policies be added
 - It was suggested that “do no harm” be clarified or removed
 - Include mission statement/goals/purpose in feasibility report
- Empowering/increasing patron access
 - It was noted that this document could be very helpful to identify broad principles and stay the course as we get into the process and

The leadership will address responses above to be incorporated into the Decision-Making Principles for Next Steps and Rubric.

III. Standing Item – Reporting of questions that have come up and status of replies.

Nothing new was shared.

IV. Standing Item – Any communication needs?

Nothing new was shared.

M. McLimans (WiLS) and M. Clark (WiLS) will edit the decision-making principles and rubric before the May NICE Team meeting. They will address mission statement development, what the next stage of this processes might look like, and a draft executive summary.

Thanks were expressed between WiLS staff and the team members for all the work and homework done so far in this process. It is greatly appreciated.

Meeting adjourned at 10:12 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Susie Hafemeister (WVLS) and Katie Zimmermann Meeting Recorders