

Northern Waters Library Service and
Wisconsin Valley Library Service

ILS Merger Report

June 2024



This report was prepared by Melody Clark and Melissa McLimans at WiLS and made possible through LSTA funds received from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.



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Merger At a Glance

Using this report and other information gathered from this process, NWLN (Northern Waters Library Network) and V-Cat consortiums will vote on a shared ILS. A vote by NWLS and WVLS system boards will follow. The NWLS and WVLS boards have final authority over merger decisions and will make the decision after careful consideration of each of their consortium's recommendations.

Identified Key Benefits of an ILS Merger

The following key benefits were identified in the [feasibility study](#) completed in Phase I of the NICE Project through focus groups, a survey, and other research and data and information gathered. They have continued to be seen as key benefits through Phase II of this work. Additionally, these benefits are similar to those identified in other ILS merger projects, both those that resulted in a merger and those that did not.

- **A merged ILS will improve the patron experience.** With a larger collection of materials, patrons across Northern Wisconsin will have expanded access to titles, including more unique titles and potentially shorter wait times for items outside the local consortium. In particular, an ILS merger would improve the user experience of patrons who live on the border of a system and may find it convenient to have a library card that effortlessly accesses both systems. 95% of survey respondents felt a merged ILS would benefit or significantly benefit patron access to a larger collection. Focus groups also identified improved patron experience, including increased access and ease of use, as a key benefit.
- **Merging ILSs would result in increased collaboration, which would allow for timely support and grow connections between library staff across systems.** In a very practical way, a merger would result in increased coverage for ILS administration and the support team for vacations, extended leaves, or if a position becomes vacant. Additionally, an ILS merger offers the opportunity for system staff to gain expertise in targeted areas rather than duplication of broad services. Member libraries and system staff also saw the merger of the ILS as a gateway to other collaboration, learning, and connection-making.
- **ILS costs for each system and its members are becoming increasingly unsustainable. Sharing the cost of an ILS is one way to increase sustainability.** V-Cat ILS costs increased 40.8% from 2016 to 2023, and the V-Cat Total Consortium Budget increased 23% from 2016 to 2023. NWLN ILS costs increased 29.5% from 2016 to 2023, and the NWLN Total Consortium Budget increased 35% from 2016 to 2023. This, coupled with the fact that member library budgets are stagnant or shrinking, makes it impossible to balance and provide the same level of system services. A review of vendor quotes found that NWLN and V-Cat would see cost savings for any vendor for the first few years, and other cost savings may be possible over time.

An ILS merger would benefit both systems in key ways: cost savings, increased sustainability, improved patron experiences, stronger collaborations, and access to ILS experts.

Why Merge Now?

- LSTA funding currently subsidizes merger exploration costs. Further, LSTA funds will likely help subsidize a significant portion of implementation costs. Obviously, if the systems do not merge their ILSs, they will not be eligible for these funds.
- These funds are tied to a firm LSTA timeline. The financial support will come in the form of potentially two grants: a \$75,000 grant from July 2024 to June 2025 and a \$75,000 grant from July 2025 to June 2026. This second grant is estimated and not guaranteed.
- Based on existing deadlines and the potential for significant savings, NWLN will need to decide on either an individual or joint ILS contract by September 2024. If the systems do not vote to merge their ILSs by that point, NWLN will sign a stand-alone vendor contract, putting them in another contract cycle.

Other Considerations

- As voting deadlines approach, there has been an understandable sense that the process is going too fast and that not all the information has been gathered to make an informed decision. However, ILS staff at the system, library directors, and staff who have made up the NICE Team and workgroups have been working on Project NICE since the Summer of 2022. Many hours have been dedicated to the process, and 37 different system and library staff have been directly involved. Even more have been indirectly involved through surveys, focus groups, and feedback submissions.
- The feasibility study noted that the perceived benefits of an ILS merger outweighed the concerns. However, as the process has moved closer to reality, the concerns have begun to take more weight. The concerns have largely been consistent: worries about staff capacity, both in potentially learning new processes and workload changes due to larger collection-sharing possibilities, holds fulfillment changes, and delivery delays. Some concerns, like data integrity, have emerged.
- If the systems merge, regardless of the ILS selected, staff at the system and member libraries will face functional and organizational changes. Support, empathy, and, of course, training can mitigate the impact of those changes.
- Other systems have merged ILSs, and individual libraries have joined ILSs. It is never a simple process, but in interviews, systems have reported that the anticipated problems, especially regarding holds fulfillment and delivery, did not materialize at the levels expected. They were manageable, and tweaking ILS settings and making on-the-ground changes was found to be the best way to make improvements quickly. As witnessed in other mergers, building in flexibility will be key.
- Workgroup recommendations are just that – recommendations. They were made with the best information available at the time, with the hope of easing an implementation process and answering important questions. However, in practice, they may look different once the ILS is chosen and its parameters are better known. It should also be expected that over time the ways that the consortia work together as they learn each other's practices and preferences will likely mean the application of the workgroup recommendations will evolve over time.

The NICE Project - Key Takeaways

Background

Northern Waters Library Service (NWLS), Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS), and their respective Integrated Library System (ILS) consortia are concurrently considering transitioning to a shared ILS and evaluating existing products to find the most suitable solution at the best price. Northern Waters Library Service's ILS consortium is the Northern Waters Library Network (NWLN) and Wisconsin Valley Library Service's ILS consortium is V-Cat. For purposes of this report, "systems" will be used throughout to refer to NWLS and WVLS.

Because of their mutual ILS explorations, it was a logical point for the systems to engage in a comprehensive joint project to determine the value and feasibility of a merger between the two Integrated Library System implementations and respective ILS consortia. In 2022, funded through state-allocated LSTA funds, the systems hired WiLS, an outside consultant, to manage the process, collect and analyze data via surveys and focus groups, and write a final report. At the project's onset, the Northern Wisconsin ILS Consortium Exploration (NICE) Team was formed to provide ideas and input for the process and its outcomes and to act as liaisons to their libraries and within their consortia and systems. This initial project determined that all research and data gathered during this process strongly indicated that an ILS merger was feasible between NWLS and WVLS. The NICE Team at that time recommended that NWLS and WVLS pursue a joint ILS and move towards shared practices and policies.

In 2023, additional LSTA funds were awarded to the systems to pursue a joint ILS, and WiLS was again hired to facilitate and manage the process and compile a final report of recommendations. In this second phase of work, seven workgroups made up of subject experts and representatives of the different system libraries and staff were formed to establish recommendations related to key components surrounding a joint ILS.

Overarching Themes

Each workgroup crafted a recommendation, or a set of recommendations, to be presented to the NICE Team and the broader stakeholder community. While each recommendation established targeted or specialized recommendations, some themes emerged across workgroups and within the NICE Team. These themes included:

- **Respecting existing processes at the local level**—In the feasibility phase of work, stakeholders showed a clear preference for a shared platform and collection with a movement towards sharing practices and policies. This preference was also present in many of the workgroup recommendations. Rather than select one system's way of accomplishing its work or developing a new pathway, many workgroups found a consensus around recommendations that, as much as possible, allowed the two systems to maintain existing practices. Once the ILS is shared and the systems work more formally

on the ILS and sharing collections, the practices and policies may, over time, become aligned.

- **Flexibility in recommendations**—The workgroup recommendations should be viewed as flexible. They were written at a certain time with certain information. It may be possible, and even likely, that the recommendations will be modified as the shared ILS is implemented.
- **High level of consensus and willingness to compromise**—Although almost all workgroups required multiple meetings and complex discussions, a consensus was possible. Workgroup members were willing to listen, learn, and consider a variety of perspectives to reach their recommendations. In the event that a consensus, or wide agreement, could not be reached, compromise was possible. Many topics were challenging to work through, in particular, the decisions related to holds, selected ILS and cataloging. Workgroup members were not always in agreement. However, workgroups understood, even when there were very difficult conversations, that compromise was necessary for the process to continue. Workgroup members did not always start and end at a consensus. Sometimes compromise happened on the way to consensus, and at other times, compromise was the solution.
- **Project principles and rubric's role**¹—In the feasibility phase, the NICE Team developed a set of principles or core values to apply to future decisions. The principles were intended to be broad and to act as a check to ensure that any shared decisions conform, as much as reasonably possible, to core values. In this phase of the project, workgroup members used the rubric to assess different approaches. However, the rubric was one tool and not the only way workgroups arrived at their decisions. In practice, the rubric had varying degrees of usefulness for the different workgroups but was always useful in reminding workgroup members of the core project values, which might not always directly align with personal preferences.

Overarching Recommendations For Potential Next Phase

Based on the emerging themes and recognition that due to time and capacity only so many workgroups could be formed, the NICE Team recommends the following overarching recommendations should the consortia agree to move forward to share an ILS and collections. These recommendations are intended to offer guidance through the implementation² and early days of a shared ILS. They are intentionally focused on big-picture concepts that may apply to a variety of scenarios.

Build a Shared Culture

NWLN and V-Cat have many similarities, and the NICE process has been a strong first step in establishing a sense of understanding and shared culture. Building from this, the two consortia should prioritize finding ways to further develop a shared culture.

¹ The Decision-Making Principles can be found in [Appendix A](#).

² See draft timeline for implementation in [Appendix B](#).

The NICE Team recommends that the two consortia develop a mission, vision, and, potentially, value statements for the new shared ILS and partnership. These foundational elements, created as a group, will help guide the work that will happen and the relationships that will form around it. The NWLS and WVLS ILS administration and support staff may also consider developing service standards to communicate clearly with members. This is particularly important at the start of a new project to ensure transparency and build trust.

The NICE Team also recommends that the consortia find ways for library staff to meet regularly to get to know each other, their libraries, and the communities they serve. The NICE Team used the Town Hall model effectively during the exploratory phase, and members appreciated the format used for information sharing. The consortia should also consider more informal ways to build community, possibly through annual in-person meetings or visits between member libraries across systems. This work should be done intentionally, and there must be a shared commitment from system staff and member libraries alike.

Regular Assessment and Adjustments of Recommendations

The workgroup recommendations have each been determined using the best available information. While the NICE Team trusts these recommendations, they also understand that the degree of change necessitates careful and regular assessment and, where necessary, adjustment.

The NICE Team recommends that the workgroup recommendations be assessed at the one-year mark through appropriate data collection methods that may include surveys, focus groups, and an analysis of existing data. This also means that benchmarks of existing data should be collected very early in implementation to understand changes once the ILS is shared. Assessment and adjustment of the recommendations and the overarching function of the shared ILS should happen routinely thereafter. When necessary, adjustments may need to occur before the year mark.

Prioritize Flexibility and Understanding

Over the past two years of NICE teamwork, an overwhelming amount of information has been gathered and shared, and the team has worked hard to ensure that the two systems are as well prepared for change as possible. However, predicting every scenario and anticipating every need is nearly impossible. In some cases, a recommendation, or a piece of it, may be impossible to implement because of software realities. In other cases, a new solution may emerge that better meets members' needs.

The NICE Team strongly recommends that both systems, consortia, and member libraries prioritize flexibility and understanding in the next years, especially in the first year of implementation. Members of the merged ILS will have a shared goal to ensure the best patron and staff experience possible, but this will take time and learning, trial, and possibly error. Focusing on open communication, assuming the best intentions, and embracing the concepts of consensus and sometimes compromise will help sustain the shared ILS and the community around it.

Lean on the Collaborative Decision-Making Recommendation in Implementation

While workgroups' recommendations answered many questions, not all issues could be addressed. Simply stated, neither workgroups nor the NICE Team can predict the future, and many unknowns may impact the use of the recommendations. Inevitably, questions will arise related to catalog records, routing slips, processes, and policies. However, the systems will have a powerful tool at the ready when those questions arise: the recommended decision-making pathway created by the Collaborative Decision-Making Workgroup. The early creation of an ILS Advisory Group will help with these future decisions.

Process Overview

Timeline

February - June 2022	NWLS and WVLS begin to work together to explore the possibility of applying for LSTA money for merger exploration support.
July 2022	LSTA Grant is awarded to the systems to begin merger exploration.
September 2022	WiLS hired to facilitate the merger feasibility process and system leadership meets with WiLS to begin work.
October 2022	The NICE Team meets for the first time.
November 2022 - March 2023	The NICE Team develops process foundations (communication plan, project principles, and goals) and performs information gathering (historical review, survey of stakeholders, focus groups, and interviews).
April 2023	Data and information presented to the NICE Team for review and analysis.
June 2023	The feasibility report is completed. It shows that a joint ILS is feasible and recommends continuing the NICE project.
July 2023	A second LSTA Grant is awarded to continue the exploration process.
September 2023	Phase II of the NICE Project begins.
September 2023 - May 2024	Seven targeted workgroups met to develop recommendations for a shared ILS.
May 2023	NWLS and WVLS are awarded a non-competitive LSTA grant for ILS implementation, conditional upon an ILS merger.
June 2024	ILS Merger Report, with workgroup recommendations, is completed and shared with stakeholders.
By early September 2024	NWLN and V-Cat review the NICE Team Report and vote on the ILS merger.
September 2024	WVLS and NWLS Trustees review the NICE Team Report and vote on the ILS merger.

Structure and Team Members

For this phase of the project, once again, the Northern Wisconsin ILS Consortium Exploration (NICE) Team was employed to provide ideas and input for the process and its outcomes and to act as liaisons to their libraries and within their consortia and systems. The team was reflective of the two systems and their member libraries.³

Northern Waters Library Service

Susan Heskin, Superior Public Library
Jackee Johnson, NWLS
Molly Lank-Jones, Sherman & Ruth Weiss
Community Library
Sara Klemann, Walter E. Olson Memorial
Library
Gina Rae, NWLS
Teresa Schmidt, Mercer Public Library
Kelly Wiisanen, Superior Public Library

Wisconsin Valley Library Service

Tammie Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library
Alexander Johnson, Marathon County Public
Library
Laurie Ollhoff, T.B. Scott Free Library
Rachel Metzler, WVLS
Peggy O'Connell, Minocqua Public Library
Katelyn Sabelko, Marathon County Public
Library
Katie Zimmermann, WVLS

In addition, ILS staff at both systems served on the Leadership Team.

Northern Waters Library Service

Jackee Johnson, NWLS
Gina Rae, NWLS

Wisconsin Valley Library Service

Rachel Metzler, WVLS
Katie Zimmermann, WVLS

Between September 2023 and June 2024, the NICE Team and project managers met monthly. Between meetings, team members reviewed documents and any gathered information and data. In this phase, the Leadership Team met regularly and performed necessary research, responded to member library questions and concerns, and helped ensure each workgroup had the information they needed to make their decisions. Throughout this phase of the process, the NICE Team employed targeted workgroups to utilize experts within the systems and member libraries to address specific issues and questions. The NICE Team created seven targeted workgroups, each containing experts on the subject matter from both systems and their member libraries, developed the workgroup charges, and helped populate the groups' membership. Each workgroup reviewed pertinent data and information as well as other workgroup recommendations in order to reach its recommendation. In an upcoming section of this document, each workgroup recommendation, listed in order by workgroup start date, is shared, along with how the workgroup came to its decision.

³ An overview of process roles can be found in [Appendix C](#).

Stakeholder Engagement

At the start of this phase of work, the NICE Team approved an internal and external communication plan.⁴ The NICE Team and project managers used the communication plan to ensure transparent and two-way communication. Workgroup recommendations were shared with the NICE Team for review and acceptance. Once the recommendation was accepted, it was shared with member libraries and system staff via email and the project website. Stakeholders were invited to provide feedback. Additionally, system staff fielded direct emails and calls offering feedback about the process or individual recommendations. The NICE Team hosted two Town Halls explicitly to offer information about the process and to receive feedback and answer questions. Finally, both systems directly asked member library directors for feedback and support for early recommendations using questionnaires, emails, and phone calls. Throughout this phase of work, the NICE project was a topic of discussion at consortium meetings.

As much as possible, the [NICE Project website](#) was used to solicit and answer member library questions. Key updates, documents, and workgroup recommendations were added to the website, and the [FAQs](#) were updated in response to member library questions and when it was clear parts of the process needed clarification. The FAQs offer detailed information about the workgroup recommendations and should be consulted in conjunction with this report.

Dozens of library staff submitted questions, completed questionnaires, and attended town hall meetings. The feedback and questions significantly and meaningfully impacted the process approach and workgroup recommendations. Stakeholders helped guide decisions throughout the NICE team and workgroups' work. For example, enough feedback related to the ILS vendor recommendation was received that the NICE Team reactivated the workgroup, whose members reviewed the new information and altered their recommendation in response.

⁴ The full communication plan can be found in [Appendix D](#).

Workgroups and Recommendations

ILS Vendor Selection Targeted Workgroup

Members

- Angie Bodzislaw, Spooner Memorial Library
- Alexander Johnson, Marathon County Public Library
- Jackee Johnson, NWLS
- Ann Larson, Sherman & Ruth Weiss Community Library
- Maria Pregler, T. B. Scott Free Library
- Katie Zimmermann, WVLS

Charge

The ILS Vendor Selection Targeted Workgroup was charged with selecting an ILS from three options: Sierra from Innovative, Koha supported by Bywater Solutions, and Carl from The Library Corporation. The group was charged with considering costs, functionality, and ease of transition using information gathered from recent processes.

Decision-making process

The workgroup met three times and submitted its initial recommendation, which the NICE Team accepted, in November 2023. During the course of the three meetings, the workgroup, through the early use of the project rubric, quickly narrowed the vendor choices to Sierra from Innovative and Koha, supported by Bywater Solutions. After discussion, the workgroup selected Koha, which was viewed by many workgroup members as being more equitable and sustainable, but the preference, especially for V-Cat workgroup members, was slight. Though most members agreed with the recommendation, there were concerns raised about staff capacity and operational stability related to the change.

After the workgroup's recommendation was shared with the broader stakeholder community, similar concerns related to change and operational stability were shared by other member libraries. The amount of feedback received from feedback forms, during the town hall session, and in direct emails and conversations that noted a desire to stay with Sierra, at least while the two systems implement the bigger change of sharing an ILS, was significant enough the NICE Team determined it was necessary to reactivate the workgroup.

The workgroup met a fourth and final time in May 2024 after reviewing the original workgroup meeting notes, its recommendations, and the compiled feedback, the workgroup issued an amended recommendation, opting for Sierra by Innovative. Of note, the workgroup recommended that both systems migrate to a new instance of Sierra instead of one system merging into another to best embrace the principle of equity and a sense that the systems would be embarking on something new together. The workgroup also recommended that the systems conduct an ILS exploration in three to five years with the system ILS merger complete and fully

operational. The NICE Team reviewed and accepted the amended recommendation in June 2024.

ILS Vendor Selection Workgroup Recommendations

After a thorough review of the feedback received from member libraries, the ILS Vendor Selection Targeted Workgroup recommends Sierra from Innovative/Clarivate. In addition, the workgroup recommends that the consortium conduct an ILS exploration in three to five years.

Decision Highlights

- The workgroup recommends both systems migrate to a new instance of Sierra. This promotes equity and the opportunity to reconfigure ILS options that are suitable for both systems.
- Member libraries recognize that a merger between the two systems will produce change. Moving to a combined Sierra platform, as opposed to switching to Koha, will mitigate some of the change, as member library staff are familiar with Sierra.
- There is a potential for lower costs with a new shared Sierra compared to the two consortia's current Sierra costs.

Delivery Targeted Workgroup

Members

- Sherry Anderson, NWLS System Director
- Jackee Johnson, NWLS ILS Administrator
- Jamie Matczak, WVLS Courier Contact
- Sarah May, NWLS Resource Sharing Coordinator
- Rachel Metzler, WVLS ILL Coordinator
- Marla Sepnafski, WVLS System Director
- Katie Zimmermann, WVLS ILS Administrator

Charge

The Delivery Targeted Workgroup was charged with determining the structure of delivery for a shared ILS platform and collections, including vendor expectations, sorting methods, and any necessary route / stop changes or additions.

Decision-making process

The workgroup met twice, and the NICE Team accepted their recommendation in January 2024. In the first meeting, the workgroup members shared current practices within each system, identified potential delivery processes related to a shared ILS, and requested further information related to high holds, space in delivery trucks, and WISCAT data⁵ to better understand the impacts of a shared ILS on delivery functions. In the second meeting, the group reviewed the data and determined its recommendation, with all group members in agreement.

A key aspect of this recommendation is that systems and libraries should assume and prepare for an increase of 15-20% in materials being lent and borrowed and thus moved through delivery. The workgroup arrived at this by consulting data from other ILS mergers in Wisconsin. Those involved with the ILS mergers reported a range of increases in cross-borrowing of 13-20%. When the SHARE Consortium brought Lakeshore, Kenosha County, and Arrowhead library systems together, each saw about a 13.1% increase. The best estimation of the Monarch Library system's increase with the change from a two-county Eastern Shores consortium to the four-county Monarch consortium was about a 20% increase.

This was the first workgroup to establish a recommendation that largely kept in place existing system processes and practices. It was also the first workgroup to ask another (Holds Fulfillment) workgroup to consider a recommendation, showing how the different recommendations are interconnected.

⁵ Additional information on WISCAT and ILL data can be found in [Appendix E](#).

Delivery Workgroup Recommendations

- Each system maintains its separate delivery vendors and utilizes the current statewide delivery vendor (currently outsourced to Waltco) to continue delivery between the two systems.
- WVLS member libraries will have two bins/bags, one for WVLS and one for NWLS. NWLS libraries will maintain their current process but could add a bag for WVLS libraries if the sorting becomes too cumbersome at the system level.
- Systems and libraries should assume and prepare for an increase of 15-20% in materials being lent and borrowed and thus moved through delivery.
- Systems and libraries should plan for an increase of approximately 15-20% in the time needed for pull lists and sorting materials in transit. Libraries should anticipate an increase in the processing of materials, both lent and received.
- The systems should work with Waltco to prepare for an increase in volume. Waltco has indicated they can handle roughly triple the current amount.
- The NICE Holds Fulfillment Workgroup considers ILS settings, including priority on local holds and fulfilling holds within each system before filling holds across systems to reduce the number of items in transit and transit times.

Funding Formula Targeted Workgroup

Members

- Sherry Anderson, NWLS
- Amber Brill, Greenwood Area Library
- Leah Giordano, Marathon County Public Library
- Sue Heskin, Superior Public Library
- Jackee Johnson, NWLS
- Sara Klemann, Walter E. Olson Memorial Library (Eagle River)
- Virginia Roberts, Rhinelander District Library
- Cherie Sanderson, Boulder Junction Public Library
- Marla Sepnafski, WVLS
- Katie Zimmermann, WVLS

Charge

The Funding Formula Targeted Workgroup was charged with determining the funding formula for a shared ILS and how costs will be distributed among members for the shared ILS and related products and services.

Decision-making process

The workgroup met three times, and their recommendation was submitted and accepted by the NICE Team at the March 2024 meeting. This workgroup had a complex charge, which took additional effort to accomplish. In the first two meetings, there was robust discussion around both funding models and the overall budget. The workgroup considered several scenarios, including models that matched current practices in both systems. The initial budget shared with the workgroup contained all costs related to the ILS, including staffing related to ILS administration and support, additional cataloging support, E-Commerce Service(s), travel and training, supplies, and reserves/capital contributions. This budget approach made it challenging to apply any shared funding scenario that was equitable for most or all member libraries.

After the second meeting, members asked that the system staff members meet to consider different approaches to help the workgroup reach a consensus. NWLS and WVLS system directors and key ILS staff met twice, including once with project managers, in order to refine the funding scenarios and the budget. The system staff developed a simplified budget that focused on shared ILS costs that cannot be invoiced separately or easily split. It would be to this budget that the funding formula would be applied. The shared budget⁶ was simplified to ILS software, the discovery layer, notices delivery service(s), cataloging utility, record clean-up, the cover image service, and enriched content service (Novelist).

With the modified budget in place, system staff worked through several funding scenarios, landing on two preferred scenarios. For the workgroup's final meeting, the workgroup reviewed the budget and applied the Decision-Making Principles and Rubric to reach a decision. Of note,

⁶ Draft Budget can be found in [Appendix F](#).

this workgroup found a consensus around a recommendation that focused only on expenses that would immediately be shared and kept in place existing individual system practices for other expenses. It also employed a novel approach of using system experts to rethink approaches for consideration.

Funding Formula Workgroup Recommendations

The Funding Formula Targeted Workgroup recommends that only shared ILS items that cannot be invoiced separately or easily split be included in the recommended shared funding formula. Once the division of shared costs is determined, each consortium will combine the divided shared costs with the costs of the ILS that are not shared (e.g., staff salary and benefits, E-commerce service(s), supplies, etc.) and apply its individual formulas to determine each member library's total costs.

The workgroup further recommends a funding approach that applies a percentage of the total shared cost based on the previous three-year average of collection size and circulation, with a per-site base cost of 1% of the total budget.

Decision Highlights

- The application of a unified base fee for shared cost ensures a shared sense of buy-in and ownership of the ILS. This funding approach allows every library to have an equitable investment or financial commitment.
- Applying only shared ILS items to the funding formula is intended to simplify the budget and allow each system to maintain the local practices that its libraries are familiar with.
- This approach acknowledges that certain data points (circulation and collection size) may change from year to year in an effort to build agility and sustainability.
- Though this approach emphasizes equity and is relatively simple, it will need clear explanations to ensure that all stakeholders understand how and why it is applied.

Collaborative Decision-Making Targeted Workgroup

Members

- Sarah Adams, Vaughn Public Library
- Tammie Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library
- Leah Giordano, Marathon County Public Library
- Sue Heskin, Superior Public Library
- Jackee Johnson, NWLS
- Cherie Sanderson, Boulder Junction Public Library
- Janay Ziebell, Neillsville Public Library
- Katie Zimmermann, WVLS

Charge

The Collaborative Decision-Making Targeted Workgroup was charged with determining a structure for collaborative decision-making for a joint ILS and resource sharing as the systems work towards the potential of shared practices and policies.

Decision-making process

The workgroup met twice, and their recommendation was submitted and accepted by the NICE Team in February 2024. The workgroup began its work by clarifying that its recommendation would apply only to decisions related to the shared ILS and that all other decisions would follow existing system processes. There are many unknowns about how a shared ILS will operate because many questions will simply need to be made during implementation as more information related to the ILS functions and process and procedure alignment will be known. The collaborative decision-making recommendation will offer the systems a pathway for making these types of decisions. An example of a shared decision related to the ILS would be necessary global settings in the joint ILS.

While the group examined existing decision-making processes in both systems, members quickly moved to develop a framework for decision-making that considered efficiency, inclusion, and impact rather than voting mechanisms. By the end of the first meeting, this framework was generally agreed upon, and in the second meeting, the group applied the principles and came to a consensus recommendation.

Again, this workgroup decided upon a recommendation that limited its scope to shared decisions and honored existing consortia voting practices.

Collaborative Decision-Making Workgroup Recommendations

The Collaborative Decision-Making Targeted Workgroup recommends the following shared decision-making structure, intended to streamline decision-making, couple efficiency with collaboration, and empower libraries to weigh in on decisions that impact their libraries and patrons:

ILS Experts at the Systems, comprised of ILS administrators and coordinators at each system, will make daily, functional decisions to ensure smooth ILS operations for both consortia. When faced with a complex decision, this group will refer it to the ILS Advisory Group.

ILS Advisory Group is activated when the ILS experts need feedback or determine that broader expertise and representation are necessary for decision-making. The group is expected to liaise with consortia members, soliciting feedback when needed and sharing information. This group will either make decisions to be implemented by the ILS Experts or, when a decision could fundamentally change how patrons access materials or libraries do business, will refer the decision to the ILS consortia at each system for a vote.

ILS Consortia will use each ILS consortium's established procedures to vote on decisions that fundamentally change how patrons access materials or libraries do business. If both consortia arrive at the same decision, it will be implemented by the ILS Experts at the systems. Should the consortia not reach a consensus, the issue will be referred back to the ILS Experts for further work.

After discussions and individually utilizing the decision-making matrix, the workgroup reached a unanimous decision on this recommendation.

Decision Highlights

- The workgroup recommends that the ILS Advisory Group be made up of one representative from each Resource Library, three from small to medium libraries in each system, and two system staff members, one from each system, for a total of ten members. The group will have geographic representation and be flexible to accommodate member capacity.
- Membership of the ILS Advisory Group should be defined and not ad hoc, but experts should be brought in as needed to facilitate decision-making. Appointments to the ILS Advisory Group should follow existing system processes.
- This decision-making structure applies to decisions that must be made across both consortia for the ILS to function. Each consortium will use its existing decision-making processes for issues that are not required to be standardized.

Holds Fulfillment Targeted Workgroup

Members

- Tammie Blomberg, Rib Lake Public Library
- Olivia Carlson, Marathon County Public Library
- Kyle Hawley, Superior Public Library
- Sue Heskin, Superior Public Library
- Jackee Johnson, NWLS
- Sara Klemann, Walter E. Olson Memorial Library
- Ann Larson, Sherman & Ruth Weiss Community Library
- Peggy O'Connell, Minocqua Public Library
- Laurie Ollhoff, T.B. Scott Free Library
- Teresa Schmidt, Mercer Public Library
- Kathryn Sullivan, Marathon County Public Library
- Katie Zimmermann, WVLS

Charge

The Holds Fulfillment Targeted Workgroup was charged with determining high-level holds functionality in a merged ILS to promote hold queue efficiency.

Decision-making process

The workgroup met three times. Its recommendations were submitted to and accepted by the NICE Team in May 2024. The first meeting focused on situating the Holds Workgroup within the context of other workgroups, as several workgroups' recommendations had implications for and even requests from other groups. In particular, the Delivery Workgroup asked the Holds Fulfillment Workgroup to consider ILS settings, including priority on local holds and fulfilling holds within each system before filling holds across systems to reduce the number of items in transit and transit times. The group also reviewed existing processes in each system, some of which were considerably different. The group made efforts in the next two meetings to reach a consensus, and for many aspects of the recommendations, they were able to do so. However, the topic of high-demand collections was a challenge because the systems employ, currently, very different approaches. In WVLS, libraries may choose to have a high-demand collection, which allows the library to keep high demand titles in the library for local patron browsing. This practice does not exist in NWLS. It is, however, very important for some WVLS libraries to maintain, at least until data indicates patrons value a different approach more.

The workgroup developed recommendations that allow for the different preferences related to high-demand collections and hold fulfillment through a set of procedures any library that would like a high-demand collection must follow. This solution was viewed as a compromise and an important way to indicate that although agreement may not be reached on all aspects of a shared ILS, the greater good of a shared ILS should be prioritized.

Holds Fulfillment Workgroup Recommendations

The Holds Fulfillment Targeted Workgroup recommends that the shared ILS employ priority on local holds* and that high-demand collections** be allowed. Holds will be filled utilizing priority of local holds for all items not set to high demand. Priority of local holds is when local holds of the owning library and its branches are filled first. High-demand collections allow select new materials to return to the shelf at the owning library if there are no local holds for patrons of the owning library and its branches. This recommendation allows libraries to use priority on local holds (current NWLN process) and also allows members to have high-demand collections (current WVLS process).

Once items are released from high demand, holds will be filled based on priority of local holds and the paging priority lists established by each system. When needed, one temporary item record will be added to the bib to allow all to place holds. Guidelines for high-demand collections will need to be determined early in the implementation phase. Library directors will be surveyed by system ILS staff to better understand the top priorities, such as filling holds lists quickly or having browsable collections. This information will be used to determine necessary ILS settings and high-demand collection needs for each library.

The workgroup further recommends that the ILS be set up so that an item is paged for within each consortium, according to their paging priorities, and then paged at the other consortium's libraries. Printed transit slips will indicate the library system along with library information so libraries and delivery sorters can easily know where to send materials.

In addition, the group recommends the NICE Cataloging Workgroup review and advise on the process for adding one temporary item record to a bib when a first high-demand collection item is added to allow for the placement of holds.

Definitions

* Priority of local holds is when local holds are filled first. A local hold is one for which the pickup location is one of the owning library's locations or branch locations.

** High-demand collections are collections of new popular materials. While in the high-demand collection, the titles will fulfill the holds of that library's patrons only. Once those holds have been fulfilled, the item will go on the shelf at the owning location. Any patron may visit the owning library to check out high-demand materials that are available on the shelf. Once the item is removed from the high-demand collection, it can fill holds from other libraries.

The workgroup recommends that high-demand collections:

- Include select new materials only
- Have materials included for a limited time

Decision Highlights

It is important to note that this workgroup worked diligently to reach a satisfactory compromise around this set of recommendations. The two systems currently employ significantly different approaches. This recommendation was crafted in the spirit of compromise and an understanding that processes, especially related to high-demand collections, are not static and will likely need to be revisited. Therefore, the workgroup recommends the following follow-ups:

- An evaluation of how holds are working one year after the merger begins and allow adjustments to be made during implementation as needed. The evaluation process should include:
 - A temperature check at six months. A town hall-style meeting is recommended to gather information from the membership.
 - Pre-merger data collection for benchmarking at the one-year evaluation.
 - The consideration of conducting a patron satisfaction survey as part of the data collection process.
 - Monitoring the pattern of borrowing, especially related to high-demand collections, and utilizing the collaborative decision-making workgroup's recommendation to make changes within the ILS as needed to ensure stability and equity.

Records Standards Targeted Workgroup

Members

- Angie Bodzislaw, Spooner Memorial Library
- Teresa Hall, Loyal Public Library
- Kyle Hawley, Superior Public Library
- Jackee Johnson, NWLS
- Chris Luebbe, Marathon County Public Library
- Jacquie Pooler, Evelyn Goldberg Briggs Memorial Library (Iron River)
- Maria Pregler, T. B. Scott Free Library
- Virginia Roberts, Rhinelander District Library
- Cherie Sanderson, Boulder Junction Public Library
- Teresa Schmidt, Mercer Public Library
- Cindy Wendt, Minocqua Public Library
- Katie Zimmermann, WVLS

Charge

The workgroup was charged with determining standards for patron and item records in a shared ILS.

Decision-making Process

The Records Standards Targeted Workgroup met twice. Its recommendations were submitted to and approved by the NICE Team in May 2024. In preparation for the first meeting, the workgroup was provided with an in-depth comparison of both patron and item fields for each system. A full list of all fields from both systems was also provided for reference. Working from this comparison, the workgroup found that there was a good deal of consistency between the systems, though some fields were used differently. The group identified fields that should remain, may need to be updated, and could be discontinued. In a second meeting, the workgroup confirmed their standards using the project rubric. The recommendation reached a consensus.

Records Standards Workgroup Recommendations

The following information shall be required for **Patron Records** in a shared ILS as it is a current requirement for NWLN or V-Cat patron registration forms or for reporting or maintenance purposes:

- Address
- Barcode
- Birth Year (optional but desired)
- Birthdate
- County (optional but desired)
- Date and Initials of Staff that created the record
- Email Address
- Expiration Date
- ID Verified
- Internet Access (broken down by adult, juvenile, and filtered, unfiltered, or no internet)
- Municipality (township, village, city, etc.)

- Name (Last name, First Name, Middle suffix)
- Parent/Guardian/Responsible Party
- Patron Home or Preferred Library
- Patron wants to receive additional library communications (beyond circulation notices)
- Phone Number(s)
- Preferred form of contact (Notice preference for circulation notices including text message)
- Secondary or Preferred Names (Will need procedures)
- Special Services Indicators (mail-a-book, no OverDrive access)
- Type of patron record (Adult, Juvenile, Institution, School/Teacher, Temp, ILL, etc.)

It is recommended that some of the items listed above could be combined into single fields. For example, Type of Patron Record, and Special Services could be combined into a field similar to the current Patron Type field to be used for authentication, loan rules, and reporting. There may also be value in keeping some fields separate, like Birth Year and County, for statistical purposes. The process outlined in the Collaborative Decision-Making Workgroup’s recommendation should be used to determine these future decisions.

It is also recommended that the following fields be maintained and migrated to a new ILS for historical and reporting purposes:

- Patron notes, messages, and manual patron blocks
- WVLS Horizon registration date
- WVLS patron alias (If needed in a new ILS)
- System-generated fields (fines, circ activity, number of checkouts, last updated date, etc.)

The workgroup understands the new consortium's goal of one account per patron. With that target in mind, the workgroup recommends that patrons with accounts in both library systems be flagged with a message to notify library staff of the duplication so they may offer the patron the choice of home library. Once the patron’s choice is confirmed, the accounts will be merged.

The following fields shall be available for **Item Records** in a shared ILS:

- Audience (adult/juvenile/young adult)
- Barcode
- Call number
- Fiction/Nonfiction
- General type of material (book, audiobook, etc.)
- Owning Library
- Price
- Purchase Source
- Specific type of material (hardcover book, Large print book, audiobook on CD, audiobook on MP3, etc.)
- Status
- Suppression options
- Volume information

It is recommended that some of the items listed above could be combined into single fields. For example, Specific type of material and Genre could be combined into a field similar to the current Item Type field to be used for loan rules and reporting. There may also be value in keeping some fields separate, or more broad, like type of material, for statistical purposes. The process outlined in the Collaborative Decision-Making Workgroup's recommendation should be used to determine these future decisions.

In addition, it is recommended that the following fields be maintained and migrated to a new ILS for historical and reporting purposes:

- Item notes and messages
- WVLS Horizon created date
- System-generated fields (total checkouts, due dates, last check-in, check-in location, etc.)

Cataloging Targeted Workgroup

Members

- Jenny Jochimsen, Abbotsford Public Library
- Jackee Johnson, NWLS
- Chris Luebbe Marathon County Public Library
- Rachel Metzler, WVLS
- Emily Mueller, Frances L Simek Memorial Library (Medford)
- Mary O'Shaughnessy, Superior Public Library
- Jacquie Pooler, Evelyn Goldberg Briggs Memorial Library (Iron River)
- Gina Rae, NWLS
- Kelly Wiisanen, Superior Public Library
- Katie Zimmermann, WVLS

Charge

The Cataloging Targeted Workgroup was charged with determining what constitutes a completed record in a shared ILS with the goal of enhancing the patron experience while considering future processes.

Decision-making Process

The workgroup met once in May 2024 and the NICE Team reviewed and accepted its recommendation in June 2024. In advance of the workgroup meeting, system staff provided members with a consideration document with an overview of current bibliographic cataloging processes and proposals for shared bibliographic cataloging practices for a joint ILS as well as a comparison review of bibliographic records added in the previous year⁷. The workgroup reached a consensus for the recommendation, but there was some question about when decisions related to cataloging should or could be made -- now or during implementation. The fact is that cataloging standards (and capacities) differ between the systems, and it will likely take some time, data collection, and learning to get the right set of standards. The recommendation is written to acknowledge this.

Cataloging Workgroup Recommendations

The Cataloging Targeted Workgroup is recommending the following bibliographic cataloging processes.

When adding bibliographic records into the system, library staff will:

- First, search the local database with at least two searches (for example, ISBN and title) for each item to determine if there is a MARC record that matches the item.

⁷ For bibliographic and other key data comparisons, see [Appendix G](#).

- Second, search the remote database for each item using a standard number (ISBN or UPC) to determine if there is a MARC record that matches the item and complies with the standards to be determined by NWLS and WVLS system staff.
 - Library staff may add additional information to the record before it is marked by NWLS staff, WVLS staff, NWLN Centralized Catalogers as reviewed.
- Request a record by entering information into a Cataloging Request spreadsheet* if a matching record meeting the standards is not found in the remote database.
 - A bibliographic record is created overnight by an automated process. The automated process will send an email to the library staff that requested the record with a message that the record is ready for an item to be added.
 - Optional practice: Library staff requesting a pre-publication record on the Cataloging Request sheet, may attach an item record with an on order status. The number of months a title can be added before its anticipated publication date will need to be determined.
 - NWLS and WVLS staff will update the bibliographic records that are automatically generated to full records.
- When using the acquisitions module, a brief bibliographic record is added with an order record.

Editing of bibliographic records

- NWLN Centralized Catalogers and NWLS staff will review, edit, and verify every bibliographic record with an NWLN library item attached.
- WVLS staff will run reports and spot checks to review Bibliographic records with only V-Cat library items attached.
- Once a record is marked as reviewed, library staff may notify NWLS/WVLS staff of errors or duplicate records for correction.
- NWLS/WVLS staff, WVLS cataloging partners, or NWLS Centralized Catalogers will correct errors as needed.

In addition, the workgroup recommends:

- All library staff working with bibliographic records be trained on the recommended cataloging processes.
- Guidelines for member library staff, cataloging staff, and system staff be developed during implementation.
- Cataloging standards be developed using the pathway outlined in the Collaborative Decision-making Recommendation during the first year of the new ILS.

*The cataloging request sheet is a process currently used by NWLN that allows member library staff to request creation of bibliographic records. A sample of the spreadsheet is available [here](#). This would replace the current V-Cat MARC Alert process.

Appendices

Appendix A: Decision-Making Principles

The NICE Team created the following set of principles or core values to apply to future ILS decisions. The principles are intended to be broad and to act as a check to ensure that any shared decisions conform, as much as reasonably possible, to core values. These core values reflect what the NICE project team heard from stakeholders throughout the initial stage of work.

When assessing either shared governance, policies, or funding formulas, the following should be considered:

- Does the policy/practice/formula **center on the needs of library patrons**?
- Does the policy/practice/formula **encourage sharing** amongst members (either ideas or materials)?
- Is the policy/practice/formula **equitable**?
- Does policy/practice/formula **offer simplicity**?
- Does the policy/practice/formula **support sustainability**?
- Does policy/practice/formula **maintain or improve existing relationships** between and among ILS consortium members?

Communication and Decision-Making Process

Throughout the 2023-2024 NICE Team cycle, recommendations from the NICE Team will be shared throughout the process utilizing the [communication plan](#) and requesting feedback with a deadline by which to respond. Participants are encouraged to communicate feedback to any NICE Leadership Team member and by using the [questions form](#) on nicelibraries.org. If a recommendation needs to be revisited, the NICE Team may ask the Targeted Workgroup to meet again to address any expressed concerns.

Final approval of recommendations on Joint ILS Merger:

1. NWLN - Special meeting of NWLN will need to be called in June.
2. Special meeting for the NWLS Board of Trustees will need to be called in June.
3. V-Cat Council meeting to share and discuss the recommendation (meets in June, September and November. Special meetings can be called with advance notice if needed.)
4. V-Cat Council meeting to vote on the recommendation (meets the Thursday of June and September. Special meetings can be called with advance notice if needed.)
5. WVLS Board of Directors meeting to approve the recommendation (Meets in May, August, and September. Special meetings can be called with advance notice if needed.)

Decision-Making Rubric

Principle	Strong - 5	Adequate - 3	Weak -1
Centers the needs of patrons	Clearly, and with real-world examples, this decision improves the patron experience, especially through increased access to library resources and decreased barriers to use.	This decision may or may not improve the patron experience, but it will not decrease it either; there is no harm, but not necessarily a clear improvement.	The patron is not centered in this decision; this decision may diminish the patron experience. It may decrease access to library resources and increase barriers.
Encourages Sharing	Clearly, and with real-world examples, this decision will increase either the sharing of ideas or collections, benefitting patrons member libraries, and system staff. This decision encourages stakeholder participation.	This decision may or may not increase the sharing of ideas or collections, but it will not decrease either; there is no harm, but not necessarily a clear improvement.	Sharing is not encouraged by this decision. Barriers to sharing may be created by this decision.
Equitable	Clearly, and with real-world examples, this decision is equitable/improves equity for stakeholders. It is fair to systems, member libraries, and library patrons alike.	This decision may or may not improve equity, though it will not decrease it or result in unfairness to stakeholders.	This decision is demonstrably unfair or uneven for some stakeholders. It will result in a loss of equity.
Offers simplicity in selection	People will easily understand the reasons for this decision and how it will be applied.	The decision is complicated or complex, but most people will understand the why and how of the decision.	The decision is very complicated, making it difficult or impossible for people to understand the why and how of it. It may result in confusion or a lack of transparency.
Supports sustainability	The decision itself is sustainable and will strengthen the sustainability of the collaborative work and member libraries. This may mean that the decision will be long-lasting and meaningful, or it may improve member library sustainability.	The decision may be quickly outdated (note: this is not necessarily a negative, it may be a necessity), or it will have little impact on the sustainability of either the collaborative efforts or individual stakeholders.	The decision is likely to be quickly outdated (note: this is not necessarily a negative, it may be a necessity) and may result in instability or harm the sustainability of either the collaborative efforts or individual stakeholders.
Maintain or improve relationships	Clearly, and with real-world examples, this decision will improve existing relationships.	This decision will maintain existing relationships.	This decision has the potential to harm or damage existing relationships.

Appendix B: Draft Implementation Timeline

The following timeline is tentative based on limited available information at the time of this report. When an agreement with an ILS vendor is reached, the timeline will become more precise.

Q4 2024- Q1 2025	ILS Advisory Group formed for decision-making and database clean-up commences
Q2 2025	Back-end configuration and implementation begins
Q3 2025	Testing and staff training occurs
Q4 2025	Go-live for staff and patrons

Appendix C: NICE Project Roles 23-24

NICE Team:

- Review of project timeline and make suggestions for adjustments
- Review and update as necessary the process communication plan
- Help develop and scope, and potentially, serve on targeted workgroups
- Review findings and recommendations from the targeted workgroups,
- Develop, with systems leads and consultants, a final suite of recommendations to the WVLS V-Cat Consortium, NWLN, and WVLS and NWLS Boards
- Attend monthly meetings and do any pre-meeting homework to make sure meetings are efficient and effective
- Respond to emails and requests for feedback/input in a timely fashion
- Be open, honest, and transparent.
- Encourage stakeholders to communicate feedback by using the [questions form](#) on nicelibraries.org.

System Leads:

- Develop a communication plan and calendar for each system to ensure open and regular communication with stakeholders.
- Develop a timeline and decision points that must be addressed, information gathering needed, as well as decision points that ideally should be decided in this period
- Review existing documentation, including past efforts of respective systems, to merge ILS' for possible policies and standards
- Communicate with ILS and other product vendor(s) to gather information about product functionality and cost
- With assistance from consultant(s), develop a suite of choices for workgroups to consider
- Provide a suite of final recommendations to the WVLS and NWLS system boards
- Act as liaisons and communication points (between the team and other stakeholders and between WiLS and the team)
- Record meetings
- Attend monthly meetings and do any pre-meeting homework to make sure meetings are efficient and effective
- Respond to emails and requests for feedback/input in a timely fashion
- Be open, honest, and transparent, and maintain collaborative relationships
- Encourage stakeholders to communicate feedback by using the [questions form](#) on nicelibraries.org.

WiLS:

- Project facilitation and providing structure and support
- Process and decision-making documentation for the NICE team and its stakeholders
- Attend NICE team meetings, help draft agendas with System Leads, take minutes, and provide appropriate information for the NICE team to make informed decisions.

- Attend and facilitate targeted workgroup meetings, help draft agendas with NICE Team and System Leads, and take minutes
- Draft a final report
- Respond to emails and requests for feedback/input in a timely fashion
- Be open, honest, and transparent

Targeted Workgroups

- Review findings and options presented by NWLS and WVLS staff, and provide feedback on a defined aspect of a shared ILS
- May provide recommendations to the NICE Team or to staff from WVLS and NWLS related to specific aspects of a shared ILS

WVLS V-Cat Consortium and NWLN:

- Review the suite of recommendations from the NICE team and provide feedback to NWLS and WVLS staff prior to the final suite of recommendations presentation to WVLS and NWLS boards.

NWLS and WVLS Boards

- Take action on the final suite of recommendations from the NICE Team and NWLS/WVLS staff

Appendix D: NICE Project: Communication Plan

Goal: Open, transparent, clear communication

This process will rely on transparency and will hinge on open, honest and communication. The NICE Team will be responsive to stakeholders and receptive to their input throughout the process.

Email Account

The NICE Team's email account, niceproject@wils.org, will be checked by the process facilitators daily. All communications will be shared with the Team in advance of upcoming meetings.

Team Meetings and Website

A NICE Project website has been established, <https://nicelibraries.org/>. Agendas and minutes will be posted to this site along with communications sent to the Team. Meeting agendas will be sent out a week in advance with any pre-work that needs to be completed before the meetings. Team meetings will take place on the third Tuesday of each month (September 2023 - June 2024) from 9:00 - 11:00 am. Notes will be posted within one week of the meeting.

Team Members

The Team is made up of staff from both systems as well as staff from member libraries, representing both systems and different library sizes. The Team serves important roles, including sharing information and acting as a process liaison.

Communication Materials

Materials created and shared throughout the process will be saved to the [NICE Project website](#). An ongoing FAQ will be established for team members to share with stakeholders throughout the process. The FAQ will provide either answers to questions or an indication of when it might be answered.

Communication Matrix

<i>Tactic</i>	<i>Stakeholder(s)</i>	<i>Timing</i>	<i>Description</i>
Website/blog updates	Member libraries, system staff, and system trustees	Monthly, within a week of preceding team meeting	Short post that will be shared on the project web page that provides highlights of the team's work.
Website FAQ	Member libraries, system staff, and system trustees	As needed, frequent updates anticipated. Standing agenda item at monthly team meeting	The process will create a Frequently Asked Questions section on the project website to share answers or indicate when questions might be answered in future phases of work.
Weekly, system-wide email updates	Member libraries, system staff, and system trustees	Monthly; in system's weekly email update/newsletter that follows the most recent meeting	Short article that provides highlights of the team's work and calls for participation.
Updates at System Board Meetings - standing agenda item	System trustees	Monthly	Brief updates, provided by a team member from system staff or the system director as bullet points.
Updates at Directors Meeting for each System - standing agenda item	Member libraries	Monthly	Brief updates, provided by a team member from system staff or the system director as bullet points.
Updates at/for member library boards as appropriate	Member libraries and trustees	As needed	Brief updates, provided by a team member from system staff, member library or the system director as bullet points.
Press releases / newspaper article content	Community members	As needed	Short article that provides highlights of the team's work.

NICE Team Internal Communication

The bulk of project communication will occur at the monthly meeting. Project managers and Leadership Team members will strive to have any documentation discussed at the meeting available for review a week before the meeting. If this is not possible, the team will be notified.

The NICE Team can use the project email, niceproject@wils.org, to communicate with project managers, team leadership, and each other. This email list includes NICE Team members, Resource Library directors, V-Cat Leadership, NWLN Leadership, the NWLS Director, and the WVLS Director.

If team members are asked questions or have concerns or feedback shared with them from stakeholders, they are encouraged to share that input with the project using the [questions form](#) on nicelibraries.org.

Appendix E: NWLS & WVLS WISCAT Interlibrary Loan Information

Snapshot

The following WISCAT data shows the number of items shared between NWLN and V-Cat libraries in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The numbers show some demand for a shared collection. Additional detail on the data collected, including title information, can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

	2021	2022	2023
NWLN Received from V-Cat	335	324	334

	2021	2022	2023
V-Cat Received from NWLN	482	568	647

It's likely that not all WISCAT requests that could have been fulfilled by either NWLN or V-Cat libraries were actually fulfilled by them. It's possible that many requests were handled by other libraries within the state.

Barriers to Patron Access

However, the number of WISCAT requests and materials shared are not a suitable metric for measuring patron needs. WISCAT has more barriers for patron access than a shared ILS would because WISCAT is a separate discovery platform, not integrated into the standard library catalog. With WISCAT, patrons usually need to seek out library staff to find out if a title might be available. WISCAT ILL is staff intensive, slow, and not provided by all V-Cat libraries. If patrons can access materials in a shared online catalog it would be an improvement.

Potential Benefits

In a shared ILS barriers would be removed for patrons. NWLN and V-Cat patrons would

- gain access to the collections without the barrier of staff intervention for the placement of a WISCAT request
- likely see requests arrive for pick up faster, as many WISCAT requests can go through multiple libraries before being filled or need to come from further away.
- benefit equally from the shared collection, as some member libraries do not currently choose to participate in WISCAT.

Additionally, the time library staff spend on WISCAT requests may be reduced.

Appendix F: DRAFT Budget for NICE Shared Costs

NICE Estimated SHARED 2025 COSTS DRAFT (Based on lowest shared cost estimates gathered)				
NICE Shared costs include the following:		Estimated Implementation Costs	Estimated 2025 Annual Costs	Total Estimated Costs for 2025
ILS Software	Subtotal estimated shared costs for 2025	\$ 158,050.00	\$ 168,435.00	\$ 326,485.00
Discovery Layer				
Notices Delivery Service(s)				
Cataloging Utility				
Record Clean Up/Authority Control				
Cover Image Service				
Enriched Content Service (Novelist)				
Record Extraction				
Contract Staff to assist with implementation				
Marketing				
	Estimated LSTA Grant	\$ (150,000.00)	\$0.00	\$ (150,000.00)
	Total Cost	\$ 8,050.00	\$ 168,435.00	\$ 176,485.00
Each consortium (NWLN and V-Cat) is responsible for their own costs in these areas:				
ILS Administration and Support				
Additional Cataloging Support				
E-Commerce Service(s)				
Travel and Training / Continuing Education/User Group Memberships				
Supplies/Misc				
Reserves/Captital contributions				

Funding Formula: 1% Base cost per location + % of Circulation and % of Collection

Estimated Shared 2025 Library Costs =											168,435.00	
											Per site base cost (1% of the total shared cost per site)	
Base cost =											\$111,167.10	\$1,684.35
Remaining cost =											\$57,267.90	\$28,633.95
											Circ and Collection cost	
	Sites	Per Site Base Cost	Circ Average 2021-2023	% of Circ	Circ Cost	Collection Average 2021-2023	% Collection	Coll Cost	Library costs	%		
NWLN Member TOTAL:	31	\$52,214.85	677,185	31.32% [1]	\$8,969.19	692,780	38.43% [2]	\$11,004.26	\$72,188.30	42.86%		
V-Cat Member TOTAL:	35	\$58,952.25	1,484,713	68.68% [3]	\$19,664.76	1,109,888	61.57% [4]	\$17,629.69	\$96,246.70	57.14%		
TOTALS for calculating %:	66	\$111,167.10	2,161,898	100.00%	\$28,633.95	1,802,668	100.00%	\$28,633.95	\$168,435.00	100.00%		
Estimated 2025 Implementation Costs =											8,050.00	
											Per site base cost (1% of the total shared cost per site)	
Base cost =											\$5,313.00	\$80.50
Remaining cost =											\$2,737.00	\$1,368.50
											Circ and Collection cost	
	Sites	Per Site Base Cost	Circ Average 2021-2023	% of Circ	Circ Cost	Collection Average 2021-2023	% Collection	Coll Cost	Library costs	%		
NWLN Member TOTAL:	31	\$2,495.50	677,185	31.32% [5]	\$428.66	692,780	38.43% [6]	\$525.93	\$3,450.09	42.86%		
V-Cat Member TOTAL:	35	\$2,817.50	1,484,713	68.68% [7]	\$939.84	1,109,888	61.57% [8]	\$842.57	\$4,599.91	57.14%		
TOTALS for calculating %:	66	\$5,313.00	2,161,898	100.00%	\$1,368.50	1,802,668	100.00%	\$1,368.50	\$8,050.00	100.00%		
Total 2025 NICE Costs =											176,485.00	
NWLN Member TOTAL:									\$75,638.39	42.86%		
V-Cat Member TOTAL:									\$100,846.61	57.14%		
Total 2025 Cost									\$176,485.00			

Appendix G: NWLS & WVLS Key Data Comparisons

Snapshot

	NWLS / Northern Waters Library Network	WVLS / V-Cat Consortium
<i>Number of libraries</i>	30 libraries, 32 locations (including NWLS mail-a-book)	25 member libraries, 35 locations (WVLS is not counted)
<i>Number of counties</i>	8	7
<i>Number of bibliographic records (at end of 2023)</i>	325,971	439,728
<i>Number of registered borrowers (at end of 2023)</i>	55,713	129,685
<i>Service (Extended county) population in 2023</i>	156,640	285,118

Review of Bibliographic Records Added in 2023

NWLN added 12,848 new bibliographic records in 2023.

V-Cat added 25,268 new bibliographic records in 2023.

	NWLN	V-Cat	Matching	Unique to NWLN	Unique to V-Cat	TOTAL Bibs
Bibs with 020la ISBN	11,310	19,105	5,147	6,163	13,958	30,415
Bibs with 024la UPC	2,412	4,304	359	2,053	3,945	6,716

Bibliographic records without an 020 or an 024 were not included in the duplicate records check. Unique records added in each consortium are unique additions in 2023 based on standard numbers. They may not be unique titles as the other consortium may have added a title before January 1 2023, or after December 31, 2023. There is also a possibility that bibliographic records are repeated in both rows above if the records have both a 024la and an 020la

A list of bibliographic records added in one of the two consortia with an 020 or an 024 in 2023 is [available here](#). The titles added in each consortium are unique additions during 2023 based on standard numbers. They may not be unique titles as the other consortium may have added a title before January 1 2023, or after December 31, 2023.

Materials Collection and Borrower Information

	NWLS / Northern Waters Library Network	WVLS / V-Cat Consortium
<i>Total Registered Borrowers in 2023</i>	55,713	129,685
<i>Extended County Population* in 2023</i>	156,640	285,118
Books, Serial Volumes, Audio and Video added in 2023	32,167	61,274
<i>Books, Serial Volumes, Audio and Video added in 2023 per registered borrower</i>	0.6	0.5
<i>Books, Serial Volumes, Audio and Video added in 2023 per Service (Extended county) population</i>	0.2	0.2
Funds spent on Print, Audio-visual and other materials in 2023	\$477,400	\$940,121
<i>Funds spent on Print, Audio-visual and other materials in 2023 per registered borrower</i>	\$8.57	\$7.25
<i>Funds spent on Print, Audio-visual and other materials in 2023 per Service (Extended county) population</i>	\$3.05	\$3.30
Total Physical Items in Collection in 2023	676,282	1,070,897
<i>Total Physical Items in Collection in 2023 per registered borrower</i>	12.1	8.3
<i>Total Physical Items in Collection in 2023 per Service (Extended county) population</i>	4.3	3.8
Physical Materials Circulation in 2023	717,270	1,592,405
<i>Physical Materials Circulation in 2023 per registered borrower</i>	12.9	12.3
<i>Physical Materials Circulation in 2023 per Service (Extended county) population</i>	4.6	5.6

All data gathered from 2023 Public Library Annual Report Preliminary Data available at <https://dpi.wi.gov/libraries/public-libraries/data-reporting/service-data>