



# **Strategic Plan**

**2020-2022**

**Serving the libraries of  
Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Sawyer, Washburn, and Vilas Counties**

# Introduction

Northern Waters Library Service exists to improve member libraries and their services. The strategic service goals and objectives in this plan represent our library system's planned effort to concentrate our attention in the areas identified by the library system board, library system staff, and library directors within the system as most important to move the organization forward in a rapidly changing environment. Northern Waters Library Service has limited resources, and because of that, it is imperative that attention and resources be allocated in a manner that allows for both a continuation of existing successful services and moving forward very specific areas identified for attention. The strength of our system comes from the diversity of the communities served by Northern Waters Library Service member libraries, the unique experiences, knowledge, and skills of member library and system staff, and we will focus on solutions that best serve our libraries. The Northern Waters Library Service is now a leader among state library systems and will continue to work cooperatively with library colleagues from across the state and nation, and community partners to identify and implement innovative public library services and programs.

## Planning Process

This plan is a result of a collaborative effort of the Northern Waters Library Service member libraries, board and staff. We thank all of the library directors, board trustees, and system staff for their time, effort and thought to help us create the Northern Waters Library Service Strategic Plan. On October 28, 2019, an all-day strategic planning meeting with member library directors, Northern Waters Library Service board trustees, and library system staff was held at the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College Community Library. Bridges Library System Board Member, Nancy Wilhelm, facilitated this meeting. This information and discussion led to the participants identifying potential strategic directions, service goals, and objectives for the Northern Waters Library Service and the Merlin Consortium. From the information and ideas gathered during the planning meeting and staff discussions, a draft framework of strategic directions, service goals, objectives, and activities were prepared. A draft of the strategic plan was provided to the member libraries and the Northern Waters Library Service Board for further feedback. The Northern Waters Library Service Board approved the plan at their September 26, 2020 meeting.

# Strategic Plan 2020-2022

## **Northern Waters Library Service Mission**

The mission of Northern Waters Library Service is to provide access to quality public library services through its member libraries.

## **Northern Waters Library Service Vision**

Residents of and visitors to the Northern Waters Library Service area have convenient access to quality library services that enrich the communities of Northern Wisconsin.

# Strategic Directions

## **Partnership**

Build formal and informal partnerships to offer cost effective services to members and lead the state in partnership initiatives.

## **Advocacy**

Advocate for library needs and build support, create awareness within communities and counties.

## **Services**

Improve and expand services to members while focusing on multi-system initiatives.

## **Sustainable future**

Take steps to ensure viability and growth of the system.

# Objectives

## Partnership

**Goal:** Build formal partnerships to offer cost effective services to members and lead the state in partnership initiatives.

**Objective 1: Expand formal relationships with other systems.**

**Activity 1.1:** Identify existing cost-sharing opportunities.

**Activity 1.2:** Document resources Northern Waters Library Service has to offer in a partnership and how systems are already working together.

**Activity 1.3:** Approach the executive committees staff at other systems informing them of NWLS's documented interest partnerships.

**Activity 1.4:** Participate in Public Library System Redesign related initiatives and pursue funding for said initiatives.

**Activity 1.5:** Continue to nurture our existing partnerships and look for ways to accelerate their success (Project ION: digitization and LEAN WI: technology collaboration, Statewide Technology Collaboration and Backup Project).

**Activity 1.6:** Explore staff sharing possibilities with other library systems.

**Objective 2: Pursue agreements with member libraries for system-wide services.**

**Activity 2.1:** Formalize agreement with resource library to perform youth services consulting services.

**Activity 2.2:** Investigate agreements with libraries to perform centralized cataloging services.

# Advocacy

**Goal:** Advocate for library needs and build support, create awareness within communities and counties.

**Objective 1: Offer system/multi-system training opportunities on advocacy skills.**

**Activity 1.1:** Maintain Wisconsin Library Association Membership/Professional Development Scholarship.

**Activity 1.2:** Offer a travel grant to attend Wisconsin Library Association Library Legislative Day to a library staff member who has not previously attended.

**Activity 1.3:** Continue to add advocacy materials to the Northern Waters Library Service Professional Collection.

**Objective 2: Inform leaders at the local, county, and state level about Northern Waters Library Service and its member libraries.**

**Activity 2.1:** Create information packets for new public library and county library board members and distribute as needed.

**Activity 2.2:** Create information packet for new legislators in the Northern Waters Library Service area and distribute as needed.

**Activity 2.3:** Create information packet for legislators for Library Legislative Day.

**Objective 3: Assist libraries in promoting their value to their communities.**

**Activity 3.1:** Share tools that can be tailored by local libraries as needed, making it easier to create awareness of their accomplishments, needs, or concerns, e.g., press releases, sample letters to officials, videos, infographics, etc.

**Activity 3.2:** Participate in gatherings of designated communications/marketing coordinators from other systems to discuss opportunities for collaboration and cooperation.

**Activity 3.3:** Promote Marketing Plan Template developed by the System Marketing Cohort for area library use.

## **Objective 4: Participate in local, state, and national advocacy initiatives**

**Activity 4.1:** Advocate on the state level for system and public library initiatives, as well as other items included in the Wisconsin Library Association's legislative agenda of significance to the entire library community.

**Activity 4.2:** Maintain and increase system and member library staff participation in Public Library System Redesign initiatives.

**Activity 4.3:** Encourage library board members, friends of the library members, system and member library staff to hold offices on state committees (Library Development & Legislative, Council On Library And Network Development, Library Services and Technology Act).

## **Services**

**Goal:** Improve and expand services to members while focusing on multi-system initiatives.

### **Objective 1: Create traveling kits/materials to circulate and share within partnering systems.**

**Activity 1.1:** Expand the Wisconsin Valley Library Service/IFLS Library System makerspace/early literacy collection to include the Northern Waters Library Service collection of Memory Kits. Items in this shared collection are made available for member libraries in participating systems to use through a Lend Items online booking program.

**Activity 1.2:** Investigate funding sources for additional kits/materials.

**Activity 1.3:** Investigate library needs and develop a priority list of additional kits/materials. This includes physical and digital kits/materials.

### **Objective 2: Institute system-wide and multi-system programming initiatives.**

**Activity 2.1:** Continue partnership with Wisconsin Valley Library Service to provide continuing education and inclusive service training opportunities to member libraries.

**Activity 2.2:** Maintain the Inclusive, Diversity, Equity and Access Team, with 4-5 members from both Northern Waters Library Service and Wisconsin Valley Library Service. The IDEA Team

will address member libraries' Inclusive Services needs and to facilitate implementation of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Inclusive Service initiatives.

**Activity 2.3:** Actively participate in System and Resource Library Administrators Association of Wisconsin and System Office Managers and Bookkeepers Association of Wisconsin and take leadership roles.

**Objective 3: Preserve current Mail-A-Book service and pursue expansion of locations served.**

**Activity 3.1:** Educate libraries on Mail-A-Book service for citizen service.

**Activity 3.2:** Investigate intrasystem and intersystem locations for increased coverage.

**Activity 3.2:** Explore funding opportunities to stabilize Mail-A-Book service.

**Objective 4: Investigate alternatives for intrasystem and intersystem delivery service.**

**Activity 4.1:** Identify existing cost-sharing opportunities.

**Activity 4.2:** Participate in Public Library System Redesign related initiatives and pursue solutions to current intrasystem and intersystem deficiencies.

**Objective 5: Develop specialized consulting/training resources which can be shared through the state.**

**Activity 5.1:** Highlight current inclusive and accessibility resources statewide.

**Activity 5.2:** Explore additional partnerships to highlight and share staff expertise.

## **Sustainable future**

**Goal:** Take steps to ensure viability and growth of the system.

**Objective 1: Investigate adding more libraries to the system.**

**Activity 1.1:** Participate in biannual discussions with potential locations to analyze current barriers.

**Activity 1.2:** Participate in Public Library System Redesign initiatives and communicate with the Department of Public Instruction about barriers in statute and Department of Public Instruction policy.

**Activity 1.3:** Coordinate with Merlin Committees to expand service locations.

**Objective 2: Funding for additional system staff.**

**Activity 2.1:** Investigate grant opportunities and alternative sponsors.

**Activity 2.2:** Participate in Library Development & Legislative committees and Public Library System Redesign initiatives to secure a more equitable state funding formula.

**Objective 3: Actively prepare Northern Waters Library Service for possible system mergers.**

**Activity 3.1:** Inventory capital and operational liabilities and assets.

**Activity 3.2:** Prepare for change by identifying potential fears and pitfalls, and discussing these with all potential library administrators, boards, and system staff.

**Activity 3.3:** County Library Planning Committees will engage with County Supervisors on possible system expansions.

**Activity 3.4:** Northern Waters Library Service will prepare with other interested systems for the possibility of Library Services and Technology Act funding availability through a Public Library System Redesign initiative.

**Objective 4: Analyze and revise existing system service formulas.**

**Activity 4.1:** Continue to work toward developing sufficient local funding of Merlin to ensure the stability of its operation and to reapportion the Northern Waters Library Service share in the Merlin funding formula.

**Activity 4.2:** Research and revise the Collection Development Grant funding formula used to provide Overdrive service.

**Activity 4.3:** Revise the current Resource Library Contract and compose a Memorandum of Understanding to accompany the contract as recommended by the Department of Public Instruction.