Strategic Plan 2023-2025

Mission Statement

The Westmoreland County Federated Library System (WCFLS), otherwise known as the Westmoreland Library Network (WLN) is an alliance of 26 public libraries in Westmoreland County and is one of twenty-nine District Library Centers under the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, PA Department of Education. It is dedicated to achieving excellence in library and information services for all County residents through the coordination of resources and services, the sharing of information expertise, and the promotion of library staff development for the mutual benefit of all member libraries.

GOAL 1: OPERATIONS/ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES – To operate the headquarters function in an efficient and effective fashion

Objective 1.1: Reaffirm the acceptability of the lease and costs associated with the headquarters space
Objective 1.2: Explore the costs associated with delivery services
Objective 1.3: Regularly review and update (as needed) the funding formula
Objective 1.4: Evaluate the physical layout at headquarters to make better use of the available space

Narrative: Leadership for WLN and establishment of the chain of command within WLN headquarters originates from the administrative offices. The headquarters function is to efficiently serve as a coordinating and support function for the libraries in the county. A set amount of funds is taken off of the top of state and county funding to fuel the headquarters operations. The current lease and location are quite satisfactory. There is interest in reviewing the layout to make it as effective and as efficient as possible. A review of all of the costs associated with delivery is recommended. The staff resources present seem to be a bit short of what is ideally needed to keep up with the workload. The recent outsourcing of bookkeeping and payroll is expected to free up on site staff time to take care of other important matters. The IT function has struggled to keep pace with the needs of member libraries. As will be described in the Technology section, an outside audit of IT will help determine what additional resources might be necessary. Additional funding is needed to fuel any of these changes. Perhaps the increase in state aid might assist here in year two of the increase. Appeals to increase county funding in the future will also be important to achieving additional staff resources.

GOAL 2: AWARENESS AND IDENTITY – To increase awareness about WLN and its services to the member libraries and the general public

Objective 2.1: Increase social media presence on multiple platforms, including timely updates
Objective 2.2: Research examples of quality PA system websites and consider outsourcing the ongoing development and maintenance of the WLN webpage
Objective 2.3: Make uniform graphics for shared resources and services available for use by member libraries
Objective 2.4: Through the PR Committee, assign responsibility within WLN for the creation and release of news releases and related supporting material.
Objective 2.5: Prepare an internal information document that explains the roles, governance, and oversight of WCFLS, WLN, its Board, the District Library Center, and the Office of Commonwealth Libraries.
Objective 2.6: Consider engaging the services of a PR and marketing firm to review branding and identity for WLN.
Objective 2.7: Use WLN delivery vans as a promotional tool by "wrapping" them with graphics about library services
Objective 2.8: Make presentations to funders and potential partners and funders and host them at library functions and events

Narrative: The interchangeable use of WCFLS and WLN is a bit confusing and libraries do not necessarily understand the role and breadth of the District Library Center designation that also figures into the equation. Member libraries see WLN as a support vehicle for their individual library work. Library users in the county see their home library as their "go to" with WLN functioning more in the background. These individual libraries value their independence and look towards WLN as a resource for countywide support in the areas of fund distribution, technology, delivery, interlibrary loan, training, select program initiatives, and grants. It is important to portray a clear understanding of these roles and responsibilities. There were mixed feelings about doing a branding project. The use and function of the Facebook page needs to be reaffirmed before effort is put forth to update it and keep it current. The webpage is seen as a clearinghouse for library calendars, select resources, certain patron functions, and as a link for staff to access valuable internal resources. Social media presence, as a whole, needs to be expanded and properly updated and maintained. WLN needs to be more proactive in their relationship with funders and potential funders.

GOAL 3: TECHNOLOGY- To provide the most robust technology, equipment, software, infrastructure, and support for WLN and its member libraries

Objective 3.1: Reinvigorate the Technology Committee, including the development of short and long term goals
Objective 3.2: Engage an IT consultant to perform a comprehensive review of the technology and infrastructure employed by WLN including identification of possible areas of outsourcing routine technology procedures
Objective 3.3: Complete a Technology Plan for WLN to cover the coming 3 years
Objective 3.4: Review and enhance the IT ticket procedure and, within that, set a defined acceptable response time

Objective 3.5: Initiate more regular Polaris training
Objective 3.6: Promote the report capabilities of Polaris, provide training, and allow staff access (at an approved level) to utilize these capabilities to generate reports
Objective 3.7: Utilize the Technology Committee or develop an Ad Hoc Task Force to explore future alternatives to the current ILS system
Objective 3.8: Provide Sharepoint training and evaluate its current configuration
Objective 3.9: Pursue grant funding opportunities to further develop the IT infrastructure
Objective 3.10: Explore the issues of privacy and develop an IT security policy for the System
Objective 3.11: Consider the costs and benefits of an ILS Librarian position

Narrative: Polaris, the technology infrastructure, and tech support are at the very core of the work of WLN and perhaps the most valued service offering. A comprehensive independent review of the technology infrastructure and ongoing research and evaluation of the next generation ILS are key to this component. A Technology Plan needs to be developed as part of or immediately after the technology study. Concurrent with this, improvements to the tech support function will be another critical part of the equation. Member libraries are most appreciative of the infrastructure that provides technology access.

GOAL 4: PERSONNEL/HUMAN RESOURCES - To provide, develop, and retain the most qualified staff at WLN

Objective 4.1: Assess WLN staff needs
Objective 4.2: Current position descriptions should be reviewed and updated and additional descriptions prepared as deemed necessary
Objective 4.3: Compensation levels (including benefits) should be benchmarked in order to recruit and retain the best staff possible
Objective 4.4: The WLN *Personnel Policy Handbook* should be reviewed and updated
Objective 4.5: The Board shall prepare goals for the Executive Director on an annual basis
Objective 4.6: The Board shall evaluate the Executive Director on an annual basis
Objective 4.7: All WLN staff should be evaluated annually
Objective 4.8: Staff shall do a self-appraisal as part of their annual evaluation
Objective 4.9: The Executive Director shall evaluate his/her direct reports on an annual basis
Objective 4.10: Create and maintain a System organizational chart

Narrative: There is a great deal of work to do at WLN and this Strategic Plan will certainly demonstrate the breadth of work ahead. It will be most important to gauge the potential workload and make sure that staff capacity is sufficient. Job descriptions should be reviewed and updated as needed. Goals for WLN departments and staff need to be established and staff need to be evaluated by their supervisor on an annual basis.

GOAL 5: FUNDING – To act as a conduit for state and county funding for WLN member libraries and to seek out grant opportunities for the benefit of all

Objective 5.1: Work diligently with Westmoreland County municipal leadership to demonstrate the need for and impacts of county funding

Objective 5.2: Review the WLN funding distribution formula, including the requisite standards for funding
Objective 5.3: Actively seek countywide grant opportunities for technology and program and service initiatives

Narrative: WLN was initially formed to be the funding pass through vehicle for state and county funds. A portion of the funding is set aside for WLN services. In the current state budget cycle, funding for public libraries saw its first funding increase in a long time. WLN is the ideal vehicle to appeal to county officials for stable and increasing funding to assist libraries in Westmoreland County. It is very important that county officials and the public at large are kept well informed about the services and the value of those services provided by the libraries. This would include printed and online materials as well as presentations and interactions with municipal officials. In addition to municipal funding, WLN needs to continually seek out grant opportunities to assist with the centralized services provided to the member libraries.

Goal 6: COMMUNICATION – To improve and foster communication between all entities within WLN and its member libraries

Objective 6.1: The Executive Director shall prepare a monthly report to the Board of Trustees
Objective 6.2: The Executive Director shall prepare a monthly report to member libraries
Objective 6.3: The Executive Director shall meet with and prepare a report for the County Commissioners on a regular basis
Objective 6.4: Document committee meeting minutes and provide to member libraries
Objective 6.5: Prepare an Annual Report for distribution to appropriate agencies and libraries
Objective 6.6: System libraries will prepare reports to the WLN

Narrative: It was apparent that there is room for improvement within WLN and between WLN and its board and member libraries. The library member and Board meetings are an important avenue for sharing information and should be supplemented with written reports. Committee meeting minutes and decisions should be communicated to member libraries in a timely manner. Meeting minutes should be readily accessible to staff. System libraries should prepare regular reports to the WLN. Regular reports from the Executive Director to the County Commissioners is important. The Executive Director should also meet personally with the Commissioners on a regular bases. An Annual Report would be of great benefit to improving communication and sharing accomplishments.

Goal 7: SERVICES AND PROGRAMS – To support member libraries with resources and advice on library services and programs

Objective 7.1: Continually explore and evaluate partnerships
Objective 7.2: Provide guidance and training to improve library services
Objective 7.3: Foster relationships with area school districts
Objective 7.4: Work collaboratively with vendor services to obtain the best possible discount regardless of independent purchasing and ordering
Objective 7.5: Explore models of services that work well in other federated library systems

Narrative: WLN does not have a home library but its role is to support member libraries in the core areas of services and programs. One of the overarching services is the provision of electronic resources through the WLN website. Print materials are currently ordered and processed by the individual libraries. While centralized ordering is unlikely, uniformity of cataloging and obtaining the best discounts possible are both very important.

WLN can function as a catalyst. Additionally, WLN can identify mutually beneficial partnerships to pursue.

Goal 8: STAFF DEVELOPMENT/CONTINUING EDUCATION – To provide WLN and library member staff with quality and relevant continuing education opportunities

Objective 8.1: Prioritize the list of suggested training topics
Objective 8.2: Conduct regular training for library directors and support staff
Objective 8.3: Update the *Library Directors Handbook*

Narrative: The thirst for continuing education opportunities is great and the topics suggested by staff seem limitless. The initial challenge will be to review and prioritize the list and to determine which sessions require internal development and which ones might be found in a more generic format.

Goal 9: DISTRICT SERVICES – To promote and administer quality District Library Services to the libraries in Westmoreland County

Objective 9.1: Reinforce the fact that the WLN Board also serves as the District Executive Committee
Objective 9.2: Work collaboratively with WLN on continuing education opportunities
Objective 9.3: Prepare an annual District Negotiated Agreement
Objective 9.4: To provide District services as set forth in the Pennsylvania Library Code
Objective 9.5: Consider separating District business from WLN business on meeting agendas

Narrative: WLN serves as one of twenty-nine District Library Centers in Pennsylvania under the Office of Commonwealth Libraries. With changes to configurations of DLCs in Pennsylvania, not all DLCs have a home library and WLN is an example of this change. Another unique aspect of the DLC role is that the District service population is the same as the WLN service population. There are a handful of DLCs in Pennsylvania where this is the case. This eliminates the need to allocate financial resources and services to areas that are not part of the "home library's" service area.

Goal 10: BOARD DEVELOPMENT-To recruit, train, and retain WLN Board members

Objective 10.1: Preparation of a board fact sheet and orientation binder for current and prospective board members.
Objective 10.2: Consideration of visits to other public library entities to learn and share information and encourage networking

Objective 10.3: Pair new board members with an experienced board member to assist in the orientation
Objective 10.4: To review the WLN Bylaws on a regular basis
Objective 10.5: To review the board committee structure, charge, and composition
Objective 10.6: Provide board training on library trends, library technology, and The Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

Narrative: The WLN board consists of 7 members. WLN should have a formal board orientation process in order to assist new board members as they assume this important role. Preparation of information sheets and partnering a new board member with a seasoned board member would be of great benefit. The WLN committee structure, including those committees set forth in the WLN Bylaws should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Goal 11: COMMITTEES- To provide an effective and inclusive board and staff committee structure

Objective 11.1: Review and update, as needed, committee charges
Objective 11.2: Develop an annual work plan for each committee
Objective 11.3: Seek greater representation on WLN committees
Objective 11.4: Provide a system of incentives for Committee Chairs and Committee members

Narrative: There are board committees identified in the WLN Bylaws. There are staff-generated committees that are comprised only of staff members. Maintaining committee members and chairs and having committees actively meeting and engaged has been a challenge. It was noted that committees are often filled by the same participants representing a less diverse array of libraries. Committee members have found that the time commitment needed to participate on a committee is significant and often competes with their regular job assignment. Clear committee assignments and goals are desired to help bring greater focus to the tasks. Use of shorter term ad hoc committees has been suggested. A system of incentives for committee participants should be considered.