

PROPOSAL FOR
WISCONSIN PUBLIC LIBRARY CONSORTIUM

ALTERNATE PROPOSAL FOR THE
2016/ 2017 STATEWIDE SURVEY



August 21, 2016

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PART 1 – SURVEY BACKGROUND AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1-1 PREVIOUS WISCONSIN USER AND NON-USER SURVEYS

The 2011 / 2012 Wisconsin User and Non-User survey uncovered a lot of novel and potentially actionable information for public libraries across the state. However, this information was not used or acted upon nearly as much as I would have hoped or expected. Since the survey's inception, I worked with WPLC to expand the findings and make the information more usable. I felt like the 2011/ 2012 achieve all that was hoped and more. The sample was good, we stayed in cost, the findings were expansive, some provided some sophisticated glimpses into the user and non-user populations across the state and these were developed into a nice looking visual presentation of the data. However, librarians and system employees often asked me... "How do I use this beautiful information?"

Some of this is simple data literacy, but I suspect that because we wanted to have a broad, generalizable central data collection the findings became a bit divorced from local information needs. I am still a big believer in broad information, but I am not sure that this broad data collection is serving the Wisconsin Library Community. While an argument could be made that this information is available to anyone who wants to avail themselves of it, I would like to present an alternate option. This is an option that departs from the large centralized data collection, and could allow WPLC to more effectively use their limited research dollars while more directly addressing information needs across the state.

1-2 A PROCESS SKETCH

There are a few elements to this proposal that I will describe on the next page. (1) There is a short series of online trainings. Trainings that instruct participants from the libraries on basic research question development, scoping of methods, etc. This would prime the library community for (2) a call-for-proposals. These proposals would be focused on using research to answer a need or information gap that they see. During the review of the proposals, (3) WPLC could review proposals with the researcher to look for any synergies, highest need, etc. WPLC could then (4) fund a series of decentralized, smaller projects that would receive analysis help, and survey development help from the researcher. It is hoped that this could prompt more ownership of findings by the library community. This is also a model that lends itself well to outside funders such as IMLS.

This is proposed simply for WPLCs consideration before conducting a large state-wide survey. MSR is happy to discuss and refine this idea and process further.

1-3 PROPOSED PROCESS

STEP 1: Webinars on basic research

In this option there would be (for example) 3 1-hour seminars on research methods. This would be promoted to the public library community across the state. The goal would be to orient people around some research fundamentals, and get them thinking deeply about their research need. This training should directly raise the thoughtfulness and development of the proposals. People would need to be informed that attending these webinars opens up their ability to apply to fund an applied research project for their library or system.

MSR could help by providing this training.

Approximate Cost for 3 1-hour Webinars ----- \$400

STEP 2: Call for Proposals

Anyone who attended all 3 webinars would be encouraged to submit a response to a “call for community research proposals” This CFP could be crafted in whatever way WPLC saw fit, and could privilege any aspect WPLC saw fit (understanding non-users, understanding messaging around a building project, understanding space, etc.)

STEP 3: Review Proposals

WPLC and MSR could review these proposals together. WPLC could identify proposals that resonate with the mission of your organization, and MSR could provide cost estimates and ideas about where projects could be effectively combined. It is at this point that projects could be decided based on WPLC interest and available funding.

STEP 4: Conduct Decentralized Research

MSR would help the awardees conduct good research for their library or their system. Funding needs would vary depending on the complexity of the project, but WPLC would have a portfolio of research projects to review/ share across the state. This also provides a model for pursuing grant funding in subsequent years.

