

WCCLS Library Funding and Governance Evaluation

Issue 1

Date: June 2024

Subject: WCCLS Library Funding and Governance Evaluation – Shared Aspirational Vision

Background

Public library service in Washington County is provided by a partnership between Washington County, nine cities, and three nonprofit organizations (together known as the Cooperative). Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) is a department of Washington County, and provides funding, core infrastructure, and support services to link sixteen library buildings into one countywide system which benefits all County residents. Library buildings and service points are operated by city and non-profit partner agencies (partners), and partners provide the staff and physical collections to offer a wide range of programs and services for community members. In February 2024, the County engaged with Merina+Co, a local consulting firm, to conduct an evaluation of the existing Cooperative funding and governance model. Under the direction of Washington County and in collaboration with representatives from Cooperative partners, Merina+Co will be facilitating a process for evaluating the current state of the system and developing mutually agreeable solutions for improvements to Cooperative funding, library service delivery, and governance.

Creating a Financially Sustainable Future to Support Community Service

For Washington County libraries to continue to provide these critical services to the community into the future, WCCLS and partners must explore crucial questions about funding and governance. There is increasing pressure on County and partner financial resources, and the cost to deliver service is outpacing available revenues. WCCLS and partners have the shared desire to address long-standing funding and governance issues, ultimately improving service consistency and equity across the County, and supporting community needs by creating a library system with a fiscally sustainable future.

Collective Agreement for Outcomes

Washington County and the partners are committed to reaching collective agreement regarding a model for the Cooperative that improves service consistency and equity across the County, and supports community needs by creating a library system with a fiscally sustainable future. This assessment will result in recommended proposals for funding and governance of the Cooperative. These proposals will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners, which is the governing board for the Cooperative, and the Board of Commissioners will make decisions on implementation of the recommendations.

March – December 2024	January – December 2025	January – June 2026	July – December 2026
<i>Define shared vision and criteria and conduct a current state assessment. Develop base service levels to inform funding options for the FY26-27 to FY30-31 levy.</i>	<i>Evaluate near-term alternatives for service boundaries, funding allocations, and governance improvements, and bring recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.</i>	<i>Revise intergovernmental agreements to implement near-term funding, service, and governance recommendations.</i>	<i>Evaluate long-term alternatives and develop recommendations for the future of the Cooperative.</i>

Stakeholder and Community Input

Merina+Co will be conducting surveys in July 2024 to gather perspectives from community members, library staff, and members of local library advisory and governing entities, on the current state of the Cooperative and service levels. The community survey will be broadly distributed in multiple languages by WCCLS.

Commitment to Partnership

This long-standing cooperative partnership to deliver countywide service to all community members has been in place since 1976. Washington County is proud to partner with the cities of Banks, Beaverton, Cornelius, Forest Grove, Hillsboro, North Plains, Sherwood, Tigard, Tualatin, as well as the Aloha Community Library Association, Cedar Mill and Bethany Community Libraries Association, and Garden Home Community Library Association. Learn more about WCCLS and library services in Washington County at wccls.org.

