



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
**PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM PLAN AND  
 CERTIFICATION OF INTENT TO COMPLY  
 CALENDAR YEAR 2021**  
 PI-2446 (Rev. 08-2020)

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Complete and submit one copy of this Word document along with one signed, scanned copy in PDF format to the Division for Libraries and Technology (Division) by Friday, October 16, 2020. Submit completed Word and PDF documents to:

[LibraryReport@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:LibraryReport@dpi.wi.gov)

Required by Wis. Stat. §§ 43.17(5) and 43.24(3)

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Library System

Milwaukee County Federated Library System

Describe significant needs and problems that influenced the development of this and other system plans.

MCFLS is in its first year of a wide-ranging set of directives laid out in a 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. Among these were improvements in technology and improving the user experience, particularly the experience for users on mobile devices. Another high priority identified by members was a need for investment in marketing system and local library resources in addition to advocacy for their libraries and communities. This system plan reflects this shift in priorities.

MCFLS is challenged to meet these needs and as a result has restructured contracts and agreements to allocate enough funding to meet those directives. Rising costs for the hoopla streaming service, another strategic plan initiative, have forced the system to already reduce the number of max checkouts to ensure the service remains viable. Although the service has been popular, the rising costs has forced the system and members to continually re-evaluate this investment. State and county aid levels will remain flat for 2021 making the completion of these directives an even more difficult proposition for the system and members.

Because of the system's small geographic area and dense population, MCFLS member libraries need to work together closely to meet the needs of residents that often don't notice or understand the differences between each library. This has affected the development of this plan and other plans. The 2020-2024 MCFLS Strategic Plan in particular includes language specifically aimed at providing more system level resources and seeking consistent circulation policies across libraries to reduce confusion among patrons.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new set of challenges for the system and member libraries. The pandemic put more emphasis on the need for electronic resources and technology to put access in the hands of patrons, particularly in the spring of 2020. This renewed emphasis convinced all the members to reinvest in the OverDrive Advantage program for the first time in several years. Recently the system and members have discussed ways to assist school-age children and their parents handle learning in an online environment. The system has also investigated ways for more contact-less services to patrons, including an online patron account renewal form. The circumstances brought on by the pandemic has made it even more clear that the system and members will need to be creative to meet the needs of our communities.

The pandemic has also brought with financial instability for both system and members. While there is no evidence that cuts will be looming to state aid, that could change after the 2020 election. Members are affected in a similar way. Some have reported little to no change in their budgets for 2021, but many expect some shift in their finances, perhaps as late as 2022. In addition, the recently restructured contracts and agreements make it possible for MCFLS to provide new or enhanced services, but this shifts some of the burden to members. Many member libraries rely heavily on MCFLS reciprocal borrowing and resource library payments; these payments provide important services for member libraries directly. The larger impact is that while these contracts provide some relief to member libraries, system services may as a result suffer in comparison to others within the state.

Did the library system consult member libraries in the development of this plan?

- ☐ No, the library system did not include member libraries in the development of this plan.
- ☒ Yes, the library system included member libraries in the development of this plan.

**If yes, describe the planning environment and process for this system plan. Include how member libraries are involved in plan development and review:**

Member libraries were shown the plan in advance of the September 3rd Library Directors Advisory Council (LDAC) meeting and invited to make comment and suggest changes either via email or at a weekly update meeting between September 3<sup>rd</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. The plan will be presented to the MCFLS Board for approval in September 2020.