

STLS Fund-Raising Advisory Committee  
Southeast Steuben County Library, Corning  
Tuesday, July 25, 2006

Present: Chairperson Dale Wexell, Southeast Steuben County (SSCL) Library. Carol Berry, Bath; Jim Sleeth, Elmira; Cindy Schamel, Savona; Karen Deutsch, Wayland; Joan Armbruster, Sherry Collins, Martin Green, Claudia Radin, STLS Trustees; Ristiina Wigg, STLS.

Dale Wexell, Director of Development, Southeast Steuben County Library, summarized committee objectives:

- Determine feasibility of an STLS fundraising program to supplement existing revenues and to benefit all member libraries;
- Make report and recommendations to STLS board for review and action

He then presented an overview of six possible methods to increase funding, estimates of what might be raised, requirements to make each fundraising approach a success, and reviewed the seven deadly sins of fundraising. (See attached presentation.) Dale recommended a 3-5 year goal and to:

- Aim high
- Develop a plan and follow the plan
- Use the methods that will give us the biggest probability of success

In this case:

- grants
- individual contributors
- direct mail

Discussion:

Q. Aren't we here to talk about sustainable funding for STLS?

This presentation covers the options for outside funding.

Q. If a grant writer is hired for a particular grant and the grant isn't funded, then that investment will be lost?

A. Yes, it could be.

Strengthen the possibility of receiving grant through: preliminary research, conversation with the grantor, review of previous patterns of funding and grantor goals, and determine appropriateness of fit

Another strategy would be to combine grants and contributions from individuals

Comments:

Jim Sleeth said that the greatest possibility for success would be large grants; that STLS needs to carefully think about the relationship between individual libraries and the System. Joan Armbruster said that the System needs dollars too. See if the System can raise both – a percentage for STLS and a percentage for members. Karen Deutsch suggested that STLS administer funds that are raised. Martin Green described STLS as a bureaucratic institution that nobody knows exists; people know what libraries are and what they do. Members would have to buy in to the process. Perhaps there could be a 50/50 split of expenses.

Carol Berry described the state-funded coser (cooperative services) process that BOCES uses to pay for services to members. Several school districts join together to purchase a specific service from BOCES. The first year the districts split the cost of the services. In succeeding years, the districts receive state aid reimbursements for the costs of the service, based on their property tax rate. State law would need to be changed in order for public library system members to benefit from cosers.

STLS sell services. Martin Green described a school district in Pennsylvania that sells IT services to outside agencies and makes enough profit to fund the service.

Claudia Radin said that additional funds would allow STLS to keep fees at the current level and add services.

Cindy Schamel asked if the additional funds would be for STLS or for members. Martin Green suggested that it is important to band together – STLS only functions to serve the members. Jim Sleeth suggested that each organization concentrate on avenues that are most likely to be successful for them.

Q. What about a foundation?

A. A foundation would need to raise \$4 – \$10 million in order to generate enough annual funding to be worthwhile. When SSCL raised money for its endowment, 85% of the funding came from less than 50 individuals.

Jim Sleeth recommended working on an IMLS (Institute for Museum and Library Services: an independent grant-making agency of the federal government) grant. STLS could ask libraries what their priorities are, e.g. outreach, bookmobile for Chemung County, rotating collections for other counties.

Dale Wexell agreed that IMLS was a good prospect as well as the Gates Foundation (interested in rural areas) and combinations of state and Federal grants. In addition a major annual event could bring libraries together and publicize the whole array of library services. For example, an 8 ½ x 11 inch insert in 14,000 copies of the local paper resulted in a huge increase in library use at SSCL.

Q. How many options should STLS pick?

A. STLS could look at grants and one annual event (Cindy Schamel)

A grant or event may not work the first time, learn, improve, try again – don't give up

Setting the goal for only one year leads to defeat.

Plan for a 3 – 5 year goal: example \$500,000 in the next 5 years

Jim Sleeth suggested that STLS start by applying for a planning grant.

At the next meeting, the committee will develop a strategy to propose to the STLS board, including key steps and measures, at its September meeting.