
RPLAC RETREAT – August 12th through August 14th, 2014
Athens Regional Library – Headquarters (Athens, Georgia)

Present: Julie Walker (State Library Director), Jason Matt (Facilitator), Christopher Evans (Director of Business Services). RPLAC representatives: Kathie Ames, Beth McIntyre, Alan Harkness (Urban Rural Multicounty); Alison Weissinger, Jimmy Bass, Geri Mullis (Urban Single County); Keith Schuermann, Claudia Gibson (RPLAC Chair), Jessica Everingham (Rural Multicounty); Pam Grigg, Richard Sanders, Darla Chambliss (Rural Single County).

Overview of the formula – Julie Walker

(See "State Grants ZBB formula FY 2015")

Mid-point salaries – \$61.5K – no step raises anymore.

Flexibility with the salary grant – up to half to be spent on an allied professional.

Questions/clarification of "allied professional" term.

Clarification – any state-paid director/assistant director with an MLS has to be paid the minimum rate at least (\$46,125.00) – and allied professionals can be paid less. Several examples/questions. May need additional clarification of "allied professional".

Some libraries want the positions to be only professionals – not converted positions.

Further discussion, including the need for the ability to convert positions and pay bills.

Introduction of the Rural Single County request for two positions – argument for regionalization and the sharing of services (bookkeeping, cataloging, etc.).

Discussion of the lack of incentive to provide regional support for less-supportive/supported counties (ex. Athens Regional, Chattahoochee Valley, etc.).

Reiteration of overall desire to keep a library in every county in Georgia.

From Jason Matt: What alternatives would be acceptable? Could there be separate formulas for urban/rural or single-county/regional systems? Should there be different models? How can everyone get on the same page so that we can go, united, to the legislature? Would a three-year phase-in be helpful? What might be done to placate any dissenting directors?

From Claudia Gibson: We need to be grateful for Georgia's state money – still 'way better than most states.

Discussion of winners vs. losers in the ZBB formula.

Discussion of the results of the loss of the pay-scale – makes it harder to recruit new directors to the state.

The next step for moving forward (from Jason Matt): We need a formula that's revenue-neutral. The new update is based on a 75K population cap for positions, vs. 80K.

Options offered – Librarians or libraries per county vs. librarians or libraries per square foot.
Are salaries/positions the priority? The consensus seems to be “yes”.

Statement about raises: Departmentally, if BOR gets a salary increase, GPLS will get one.

(Note: There has been no COLA for the past six years.)

Any merit/performance raises would be determined locally.

Can population density be considered as a funding factor? *(Note: Operating costs for multi-county systems are increased due to travel.)*

Can a ratio of population-to-counties be weighted to make it more fair?

Can there be one fully-funded position, with other positions to be funded at less than 100%?

Reiteration of the phase-in preference, this time for conversion of positions.

Suggestion of a flat per-capita grant (SSG or materials) helping larger systems, possibly placating dissenting votes.

Discussion of formula variations

“Allison’s Plan” – 67,750 base population – single counties with larger populations gain; single counties with small populations lose.

“Allison’s Plan 2.0” – Two salary ranges, and 47% of funding based on population. Kathie Ames stated that having two pay rates would devalue the regional service and the value of the staff.

Much discussion and manipulation of spreadsheets, including rankings by degree/percentage of gains and losses. An observation was offered that it would have been handy to have had this chart in Macon at the last directors meeting. Discussion included caps on gains (not popular, overall) but the ultimate goal is to go to a new formula, rather than maintaining the old broken one... but phasing in is still a popular concept.

[Small group discussions.]

Resumption of group – individual groups report their preference, three for the ZBB formula, and one for the tiered-salary option. (Urban Single Counties supported the tiered-salary option.)

Discussion of the best way to present a united front to the legislature. GCPL can ask for book money, though we can’t get it from BOR.

Discussion of how to present a decision to the constituents – and is it time for a vote?

Question: Are the rural single-county votes weighted too heavily?

Further discussion of the ZBB formula and the tweaking thereof.

Discussion of how the phase-in would work. Jason Matt said, “I have no idea.” Christopher Evans agreed that it would be problematic, especially when dealing with hiring personnel.

We (RPLAC) are not asking BOR for more money, we’re making a recommendation to GPLS about how we want to see the money divided.

Possibility: drafting a letter to library trustees with RPLAC’s recommendations.

MOTION from Jessica Everingham for RPLAC to support the state grants ZBB formula for FY 2016, adjusted to bring in line with the current FY 2015 formula.

SECOND from Kathie Ames.

PASSED unanimously.

Discussion on the motion and its implementation. 50% of funding allocated for professional salaries and positions, and up to 50% may be allocated to other support staff. It would be possible to apply for a waiver for the library system to "cash in" support staff positions.

MOTION from Geri Mullis, that up to 50% of the funding allocated for professional positions may be used to fund system support staff.

SECOND from Alan Harkness.

PASSED (Kathie Ames voted "no").

MOTION from Kathie Ames that GPLS submit the adjusted ZBB budget to BOR.

SECOND from Keith Schuermann.

PASSED unanimously.

RPLAC RETREAT – DAY TWO (August 13, 2014)

Richard Sanders was nominated for RPLAC Secretary and was appointed by acclaim. (Sigh.)

Question of populations listed on the RPLAC webpage – it was generally agreed that the figures have been re-assessed and will need to be corrected.

Pat Herndon would like a representative from RPLAC to join the committee to work on GLASS services. Kathie Ames volunteered, but later realized that she wouldn't be "in office" long enough. Alan Harkness volunteered in her place.

Discussion of RPLAC bylaws, specifically the rule about missing a meeting.

- "may" be automatically removed
- two (2) consecutive meetings of any type

MOTION from Allison Weissinger and Jimmy Bass to approve the re-wording in the RPLAC bylaws.

SECOND from Geri Mullis.

PASSED unanimously.

Policies for State Aid (Kathryn Ames)

There is an e-mail from Anna Lyle requesting a re-evaluation of the word "citizen" in the State Aid policies, also on the "Application for State Aid".

MOTION from Geri Mullis to remove the word "citizen" and replace it with "all people".

SECOND from Pam Grigg.

PASSED unanimously.

Policies for Public Library State Grants Program

Item 1.5 – Need to clarify which boards are required to meet (should be "governing boards").

Kathie Ames to make corrections.

Minutes should be collected in perpetuity and maintained at system headquarters.

Question from Alan Harkness about the second paragraph – consequences of not following policies? Change "shall" to "will"? As in: "State Aid will be withheld until the Library System comes into compliance with these policies."

Discussion of Item 1.2.

Discussion of Item 1.3 – Distribution of Services. The template from GPLS mostly reflects regional distribution. "Plan of Distribution of Services" is a separate document.

Group was divided into sub-committees. Pam, Alan, Keith (Definitions); Beth Jessica, Allison (Sections 1 & 2); Richard, Jeri, Kathie (Section 3); Darla, Jimmy, Claudia (Section 4).

Subcommittee recommendations/corrections for the definitions and sections – see corrections made on master copy of the document.

MOTION from Jimmy Bass to accept the waiver for the State Personnel Grant.

Second from Keith Schuermann.

PASSED unanimously.

Maintenance of Effort (Julie Walker)

Julie has had discussions with ACCG relating to the degrees of cuts as compared with other county departments.

Is MOE still a useful tool? Is withholding funds an empty threat? Should withheld funds be proportional or all-or-nothing?

Claudia: Use of the term "matching grant" may be useful.

Remember that MOE is based on regional numbers, rather than individual funding agencies.

"If a waiver is not granted, GPLS reserves the right to reduce state funding in proportion to the local funding reduction, up to 100% of the current grant."

The consensus seems to be that MOE needs to be continued. The question continues – can local funding be reduced in proportion to a state cut? Question from Allison Weissinger: Are there any other state agencies that fund local staff the way GPLS does?

MOTION from Allison Weissinger that RPLAC approve of the MOE rule with case-by-case adjudication by GPLS.

SECOND from Alan Harkness.

PASSED unanimously.

Discussion of Georgia Public Library Standards

Consensus that there should be an addition of language to the first paragraph to reflect the "a library in every county" concept. Much questioning and suggested wordsmithing. Some items to be delegated to the GPLS IT staff and to the Facilities Manager.

Agreement to add a "box" for a computer replacement cycle.

Beth McIntyre will e-mail the corrected version to the RPLAC members.

RPLAC RETREAT – DAY THREE (August 14, 2014)

(Notes from Jessica Everingham)

MOTION from Alan Harkness to approve the letter we are sending to the library directors.

SECOND from Kathie Ames.

PASSED unanimously.

MOTION from Keith Schuermann to approve the letter to the state's library trustees from

RPLAC. (This would be a nicely-printed letter to every trustee, to be signed at a meeting by all the library directors – some question as to who should mail the letter.)

SECOND from Pam Grigg.

PASSED unanimously.

MOTION from Kathie Ames to approve the letter to the state legislators from library trustees.

SECOND from Pam Grigg and Darla Chambliss.

PASSED unanimously.

Expectations and needs from GPLS

Positive comments from Claudia Gibson, but there are concerns. One big concern is GPLS staff people not being in the GPLS office. There are staff people who are not returning phone calls.

Request for more human resources material on the GPLS website.

Compliment for the Marti Minor training sessions. Reiteration of the need for training, especially at directors meetings.

Question: Can there be more networking opportunities? Table talks, etc.?

E-rate issue: Both sides are aware of difficulties. Julie understands that it's been difficult, but is hoping that conditions will get better. USG will be hiring an E-rate team – they may be available to help public libraries.

Facilities: An opinion was offered that Nate is overloaded and needs more help/staff to provide closer oversight of details. Building sub-standard libraries may affect future construction funding. Possibly Nate could use more clerical help with all of the paperwork.

Website help: Possibly a template or templates?

Partnership advisory committee? To choose more successful/geographically-friendly partnership programs.

Suggestions for improving COMO and talking up GLA to make more people want to attend.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:

Richard Sanders
RPLAC Secretary