

# WCCLS Library Funding and Governance Evaluation

## Issue 3

**Date:** September 2024

**Subject:** WCCLS Library Funding and Governance Evaluation – Current State Assessment

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### Project 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). 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. For more information on the project background, refer to **Issue 1** at [wccls.org/writing-our-future](https://wccls.org/writing-our-future).

### Building a Shared Vision for the Ideal Cooperative Model

WCCLS and partners participated in a process for establishing a shared vision for the ideal Cooperative model that encapsulates a 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. The shared vision has served as a guidepost while evaluating the strengths and opportunities of the current Cooperative model and working towards the recommended proposals for funding and governance of the Cooperative. For more information on the shared vision, refer to **Issue 2** at [wccls.org/writing-our-future](https://wccls.org/writing-our-future).

### Understanding the Strengths and Opportunities of the Cooperative Model

Assessing the current state of the Cooperative consisted of a period of information gathering and analysis to compile an understanding of whether the Cooperative is fulfilling the shared criteria for an ideal Cooperative model established in the shared vision. Insights and perspectives regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the Cooperative’s current governance, funding, and service delivery models were collected through a series of interviews and surveys geared towards a range of audiences, including both existing and non-library users throughout the county, community-based organizations, library staff, as well as partner leadership and advisory boards. Site visits to partner libraries, service population and demographic analysis, and financial analysis of historic revenues and expenses associated with library services were also conducted to understand the service offerings, communities served, and fiscal considerations of each partner. The results of the data collection and analysis efforts were presented to WCCLS and the partners to inform their evaluation of the current Cooperative model against each of the shared criteria and build a common understanding of where there are opportunities to improve the governance, funding, and service models to align with the shared vision.

*Table 1: Count of responses received for surveys issued to various audiences for the WCCLS Funding and Governance Evaluation Project in 2024*

Survey	Total Responses
Community Survey	18,290
Community Based Organizations	41
WCCLS and Partner Library Staff	344
WCCLS Library Governing Bodies, Advisory Boards, Friends Associations	75

### Using the Current State Assessment to Develop Future State Solutions

The Cooperative provides important and valuable services to the community. WCCLS and partners agree that cooperation and collaboration are essential to providing a higher level of services to the community than can be achieved apart. The results of the current state assessment are intended to identify where there are gaps in achieving the ideal state of the Cooperative and guide the development of solutions to bridge the identified gaps. While some of the identified challenges may be temporarily and/or partially addressed with modifications to the Cooperative’s current funding and governance model, it is apparent that consideration of alternative governance, funding, and service delivery models is necessary to make significant strides in fulfilling the shared criteria. Moving forward, the Funding and Governance Evaluation Project will seek to evaluate future alternatives to address the gaps identified within the Current State Assessment on both a near-term and long-term timeline.

