

Spring Symposium Community Conversations with MVLS Member Library Staff and Trustees

Thursday, May 2, 2024

Facilitated by Kate McNally, New York Council of Nonprofits, BoardStrong

Participants: Approximately 30 member library representatives participated. Twelve of the 14 member libraries had representation. Two libraries were represented by a single trustee, six by a single staff member and four had multiple staff and board representatives. Eleven participants completed the short pre-session survey.

Format: No MVLS staff or trustees (Kim Zimmer, the Director's representative on the MVLS Board is an exception) were present for the community conversation. Kate McNally led both large group and small group discussions, with reporting back to the full group. Notes were taken on flip-charts. These charts were not shared with MVLS. Kate McNally provided an oral report to MVLS staff in a Zoom session five days after the Symposium. Wade Abbott, Mary Carrier, Kate Clingan and Eric Trahan participated.

Next Steps Thoughts on creating an action plan.

- Should a draft plan be shared to generate comments and input from those unable to attend?
- Should other surveys and meetings be planned?
- How do we provide non-defensive responses?

Results

Communications – MVLS to members

- More! Newsletters, emails, meet-ups, etc.
- More that celebrates library's accomplishments & services
- More explanations of what the system does – menu of services

Getting Feedback from Members

- Make it easier to participate in MVLS Board Meetings – time, place, materials shared, etc.
- Create more connections with members – more opportunities for input
- Listen and respond respectfully

MVLS Services

- Conduct an audit of what members know about and how they use MVLS services
- Training! New Directors, Trustees, etc.
- Training! Fundraising & Grants, HR, Facilities, Policies, Planning, etc.

MVLS Culture

- More celebration of libraries & pride in accomplishments
- More opportunities for social interactions among members
- Better, more respectful discussions when the answer is “no”
- What is the right level of support or intervention?

JA/Polaris issues

- Define opportunities for input & change – committees, user groups, Council, etc.
- How to encourage ownership?
- Issues – permissions, bulk change, auto-renew