

## COVID-19 Response & Recovery Working Group

March 2021 Report to the Board

### Working Group Members:

- Ric Swierat, Board President
- Barry Ramage, Vice President
- Mark Wilson, Treasurer
- Priscilla Goldfarb, Executive Committee, Member-at-Large
- Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, MHLS Executive Director

1. The working group is re-calibrating its strategy in light of recent news about the PPP loan and the chance that funds withheld from the state last year may be released. However, the group advises to continue monitoring for grant opportunities that would provide unrestricted operating funds or those that clearly match existing action plan items.
  - a. **ACTION ITEM:** To this end, the working group would like to ask for board members' assistance to achieve the distinction of being a board where 100% of its members have financially invested in the organization. This was an action discussed during the one-on-one interviews conducted in 2020 to ensure we can tell potential donors and grantmakers that our own board believes in the organization enough to donate their personal funds. Please watch for an email after the March Board meetings with details of how you can help.
2. The working group has completed a marketing research survey in reaction to findings from the one-on-one interviews with board members that part of our challenge in raising funds will be how we convey our role and value to potential donors and grantmakers who are not current stakeholders.
  - a. The survey was distributed through all MHLS discussion lists, promoted in the MHLS Bulletin and messages were sent directly to all member library directors, trustees, and Friends Group Presidents through Constant Contact. All MHLS staff and board members were also notified. The survey was open from January 11 – 25<sup>th</sup> and garnered 225 responses.
  - b. Working Group members have conducted an initial analysis.
    - i. 99% of respondents rate the value of the System as “extremely valuable” or “very valuable”
    - ii. 99% of respondents rate the value of what their library is able to provide to their patrons thanks to System services as “extremely valuable” or “very valuable”
    - iii. Top 10 phrases that describe the System:
      1. Relevant
      2. Helpful
      3. Friendly
      4. Good Return on Investment
      5. Dependable

6. Trustworthy
  7. Responsive
  8. Collaborative
  9. Accessible
  10. Accountable
- iv. Open ended questions explored how to best explain the system to others and what the system means to local stakeholders. Answers grouped into four categories:
- a. ORGANIZATION IMPACT
    - i. Essential
    - ii. Comprehensive
    - iii. Collaborative
    - iv. Partnership
    - v. Necessary
    - vi. Vital
    - vii. Invaluable
    - viii. Gem
    - ix. "Go to"
  - b. COMMUNITY IMPACT
    - i. "small becomes large"
    - ii. Multiplier
    - iii. Access to more
    - iv. Enhances
    - v. Expands service options
    - vi. Free resources
    - vii. Economical
    - viii. Enlarger
  - c. SYSTEM METAPHORS
    - i. Lifeline
    - ii. Backbone of the library
    - iii. Mothership
    - iv. Heart and Brain of Libraries
    - v. Behind the Scenes
  - d. PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCE
    - i. Forward thinking
    - ii. Highly professional
    - iii. Leader
    - iv. Education for Trustees
    - v. Education and support for professional library staff
    - vi. Knowledgeable
    - vii. Influential
- ii. Marketing consultants, volunteering their time to the Working Group, are also analyzing the results to help with messaging in fundraising and grant writing efforts.