



To: California Public Libraries

From: Susan Hildreth
State Librarian of California *Susan Hildreth*

Re: Focus Groups on CLSA Cooperative System Services

Date: April 24, 2006

In 2005 many of you attended focus groups on the status of California Library Services Act (CLSA) cooperative system services, which were held throughout the state in late November and early December. A summary of the results from these focus groups is attached.

As you read through the report, I do not expect that you will necessarily be surprised by the findings. What I see from the comments and recommendations from the library community is a validation that, while some CLSA programs and services are still highly regarded and valued, there is much room for improvement and change.

This report will be the basis for future discussion and planning. With the assistance of the library community, the Library of California Board and California State Library staff must determine the most effective strategy for retooling resource sharing for California in the 21st century. We are reviewing system reference services and hope to have some possible new models to share with the library community later this year. Tom Andersen, Library Development Services Bureau Chief, is participating in a multi-state conference on the future of statewide materials delivery systems later this year. I am hopeful that this effort will provide useful information and possible models for delivery services in California. A convocation is being planned for 2007 that will provide an opportunity to assess the future and the challenges for library services in California. I know that 21st century resource sharing activities will be an important topic for consideration at the convocation.

The California State Library, the CLSA systems and the library community have made an enormous investment in resource sharing in the last thirty years. I appreciate your dedication to resource sharing and your participation in this review process.

Current State of CLSA Cooperative Library System Service Assessment

Summary Report of Focus Group Results

Prepared for the California State Library and the Mountain Valley Library System by Maureen Sullivan, Focus Group Facilitator and Consultant, with assistance from Susan Hildreth, State Librarian, and California State Library staff.

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I. Description of the Process Used

Eight separate focus group sessions were held throughout the state between November 28 and December 8, 2005. One of these sessions was conducted as a videoconference with five different sites. Focus groups were conducted in San Diego, Pasadena, Santa Barbara, Fresno, San Jose, Sacramento, and Redding. The focus group conducted by videoconference included San Luis Obispo, Calexico, Modesto, Palm Springs, and Crescent City.

Four general questions were posed in each session:

1. What works well now in cooperative library services?
2. What does not work well now?
3. What is of most value to you and your members?
4. What desired changes can you identify?

The responses to the questions were recorded, mostly on flip chart sheets. The groups produced extensive lists of responses to each question and there were many separate items. A careful review and analysis of this documentation resulted in the following set of recommendations. A summary of the responses to the four questions posed in the focus groups follows the recommendations.

II. Recommendations from the Focus Groups

The series of sessions produced a wealth of information and ideas. It is important to note that some of the ideas for change fell outside of the scope of this work. The following recommendations are based upon a careful review of the results of all of the sessions. They are focused on the improvement of cooperative library systems and service. A working assumption (and one that was expressed in several groups) is that changes and improvements are likely to be made with no new funding support. This suggests the probability of resource reallocation, which a number of individuals involved in these meetings, recognized.

State Librarian Susan Hildreth has reviewed these recommendations from the focus groups. Her comments, beginning with "CSL" (California State Library), are in Section III.

Library of California Board

- Define the role and responsibilities of Board members more clearly.
- Appoint more practitioners to the Board, i.e., individuals who would bring more relevant knowledge and experience to the work of the Board.
- Review and assess the role and purpose of this Board to address whether it should continue to exist.

Transaction Based Reimbursement

- Maintain the program and increase funding

Funding for Cooperative Library Service

- Fund services and programs on both a statewide and a regional basis rather than continuing to fund the individual systems.
- Work to achieve greater stability in funding, especially for the Transaction Based Reimbursement and the Public Library Fund programs.

Programs

- Investigate the feasibility of making Reference a statewide program.
- Investigate the feasibility of a statewide delivery system.
- Assess the current status and effectiveness of the System Advisory Boards to determine whether to sunset them. If they are to continue, identify ways to make them effective.

Structure and Organization

- Enable consolidation of systems.
- Continue to involve members. Create more opportunities for individuals to come together and to be involved.
- Identify ways to increase the flexibility and efficiency of systems.

- Look at the issue of equity: are there ways to achieve greater equity between rural and urban and among the different systems?
- Analyze the whole structure to identify areas for improvement. Consider a distributed service model that would provide direct access to services (not through a cooperative library system) when feasible.
- Explore the feasibility of and support for expanding the systems to include other types of libraries, to create multi-type systems.

Marketing and Promotion

- Develop a program of public awareness to ensure that the general public, community leaders, and elected officials understand libraries, library service, and cooperative systems.
- Develop a strategy to create a positive public image for libraries.

Service

- Design and conduct statewide user assessments to determine what the people of California really need and expect from library service.

Standards and Assessment

- Develop sets of standards to enable greater consistency in performance across the state. Categories include: facilities, technology, staffing, and collections.
- Establish a means to do outcomes-based assessment.

Networking, Cooperation, and Collaboration

- Create communities of practice to bring people who do similar work or who have common areas of interest to together to network and to learn from each other.

III. State Librarian's Comments on the Recommendations

Library of California Board

- Define the role and responsibilities of Board members more clearly.

CSL: Sections 18821, 18724, and 18725 of the Education Code already specifically list the powers and duties of the Board, and there probably should not be any additional specificity included in the law. If there is general agreement that it is needed, State Library staff can develop a fact sheet that explains the Board's role and responsibilities, its composition, and how its actions affect cooperative library systems, public libraries, and the public.

- Appoint more practitioners to the Board, i.e., individuals who would bring more relevant knowledge and experience to the work of the Board.

CSL: The governor and the two legislative houses – the Assembly and the Senate – appoint Board members. The law is specific about appointments to the Board; appointments are divided among the general public and representatives from libraries. The four legislative appointments and one of the governor's appointments are to represent the general public. The remaining eight gubernatorial appointments are persons who "must work for, or be part of, or be associated with, the governance structure of the type of library they represent." Public, academic, school, and special libraries each have two representatives.

Furthermore, the law says "It is the intent of the Legislature that members of the state board be broadly representative of the people served by libraries statewide and that members reflect the cultural traditions of California's people and the diverse geographic areas of the state."

It probably is unrealistic to expect that the legislature and/or the governor would approve increasing the ratio of library practitioners to members of the general public on the Board.

- Review and assess the role and purpose of this Board to address whether it should continue to exist.

CSL: I think this is a legitimate exercise that would be part of a general review of the California Library Services Act and regulations.

Transaction Based Reimbursement

CSL: *This CLSA program, popularly known as TBR, supports reimbursement of local libraries for a portion of the costs they incur when they extend lending services beyond their normal clientele. Discussions in the focus groups centered on the importance of the program and concern about ongoing funding. First, here is a review of the components of this program:*

- **Interlibrary Loan**

Lending of material from one library to another as a result of a user request for the item. Public libraries as well as non-public libraries (i.e., public and private academic libraries, not-for-profit corporate libraries, school libraries, etc.) are reimbursed only when the borrowing library is a California public library. Public libraries are reimbursed for loans made to each other and to eligible non-public libraries. Only handling costs associated with interlibrary loan transactions are reimbursed.

- **Direct Loan**

Over-the-counter loan of material by a California public library to a resident of some other California public library jurisdiction. Direct loans are reimbursed on a net imbalance basis. A participating public library is reimbursed for the handling costs of those loans made to non-residents that exceed the number of loans made by all other public libraries to the participating library's own residents. The Direct Loan Program has two provisions of service:

Equal Access: If the public library has agreed to participate in the Equal Access provision of CLSA, it is obligated to provide non-resident over-the-counter loan service to residents of public libraries that belong to the same CLSA Cooperative Library System as the lending library.

Universal Borrowing: If the public library has agreed to participate in the Universal Borrowing provision of CLSA, it is obligated to provide over-the-counter loan service to the residents of all other California public library jurisdictions.

Every year the State Library conducts a survey of selected libraries to determine current costs of handling direct and interlibrary loans. The results are adopted by the Library of California Board as loan

reimbursement rates subject to the approval of the state Department of Finance. For the past several years the Department of Finance has approved the rates, which have tended to increase annually. Unfortunately, the budget for the TBR program element has not kept pace with the rising costs of handling loans. In fact, in 2005/06 there was a slight decrease, and the governor has proposed no increase for 2006/07. As a result, TBR payments to libraries have been prorated in order to distribute equitable reimbursements, and currently libraries are receiving much less than 100% of the full reimbursement rate.

As noted later in this document, the State Library is committed to obtaining adequate state funding for the TBR program, and intends to submit a request for additional funding in the 2007/08 Governor's Budget. However, since this process is required to be kept strictly confidential, we will not be able to alert you to the progress of the request until the proposed Budget is released in January of 2007. Even then, we will not be able to tell you if any additional funds reflect what we requested. The Department of Finance requires that we maintain this level of confidentiality.

The TBR program element is also important because it contributes a substantial amount of the funds necessary to meet the maintenance of effort required by the federal government in order for California to receive Library Service and Technology Act (LSTA) grant funds.

Funding for Cooperative Library Service

A general theme throughout the sessions was the need to increase funding, both to support library service and to expand services.

- Fund services and programs on both a statewide and a regional basis rather than continuing to fund the individual systems.

CSL: This approach was the long-term intent of the Library of California Act, which never achieved the financial momentum to move forward, and has been zero funded for several years. It is highly unlikely that it will begin to receive state funding again.

The existing CLSA systems do serve as regional cooperative organizations, albeit in most cases on a smaller geographic scale than the Library of California regional networks. Certainly two or more systems can decide to consolidate to become a larger regional organization.

An analysis of services that are primarily funded at the system level but could be more appropriately funded at the statewide level should be conducted. Reference service provided by systems probably is the most obvious of the currently funded CLSA elements that should be reviewed, and indeed that process has already begun with the focus groups held throughout the state in the summer of 2005.

The possibility of a statewide or larger regional system of delivery and courier service also needs to be reviewed, although frankly, given our state's size and geographical diversity, it is daunting to consider one statewide delivery program that would adequately meet the needs of all public library customers. Many states and regional cooperatives are also looking at new ways of delivering library materials more cheaply and effectively. The State Library hopes to participate in a national symposium on delivery of library materials to be held in Colorado later this year and to be able to send representatives from some of the CLSA systems.

Many of the State Library's programs, especially those funded by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), are statewide. Certainly the Infopeople project is intended to provide training and continuing education opportunities to all library staff throughout California.

- Work to achieve greater stability in funding, especially for the Transaction Based Reimbursement and the Public Library Fund programs.

CSL: As an executive agency, the State Library does submit requests for additional monies for underfunded programs such as TBR and PLF. We also are an information resource for the California Library Association when it supports legislation for additional funding for these programs or when CLA representatives testify at legislative hearings. Greater stability, if that means an assured amount of funding from year to year, may not be an entirely realistic goal. It is certainly desirable, but is subject to many undependable factors such as the state of the economy and changes in administration. What we can all do is continue to impress upon our governor and legislators the importance of these programs and their effect on the citizens of California so that program budgets will be preserved.

Programs

- **Reference**

Investigate the feasibility of making Reference a statewide program.

- **Delivery**

Investigate the feasibility of a statewide delivery system.

CSL: As mentioned above, this is in progress for both reference and delivery. No assumptions have been made that these services should or could be delivered on a statewide basis instead of regionally, but the possibility needs to be investigated.

- **System Advisory Boards**

Assess the current status and effectiveness of the System Advisory Boards to determine whether to sunset them.

If they are to continue, identify ways to make them effective.

CSL: We do need to look anew at the System Advisory Boards (SABs). Sunsetting them would entail changing the California Library Services Act, and if we intend to amend the statute, we should be looking at all sections of the law to determine what else needs to be modified or eliminated, so that changes regarding the SABs would be part of a larger effort.

The Library of California encouraged public involvement by including laypeople on the governing boards of the regional networks. If the SABs were eliminated, there would have to be another vehicle for obtaining public input regarding CLSA system policies and procedures, unless it was determined that public comment obtained by system member libraries would be sufficient.

If the SABs are to continue, we must find ways to invigorate them so they become more useful and effective.

Structure and Organization

CSL: In considering CLSA structure and organization, one must keep in mind that eventually CLSA regulations and/or statute must be revised. All of the following concepts will have to be addressed when that occurs.

- Enable consolidation of systems.

CSL: The California Library Services Act statute and regulations allow systems to consolidate, subject to approval by the state board.

Consolidation provides one method for systems to provide better services more efficiently by reducing administrative costs and opening up resource-sharing opportunities to a wider range of libraries.

- Continue to involve members. Create more opportunities for individuals to come together and to be involved.

CSL: To be successful, this has to be initiated from within the system, and realistically it probably will have to be done with local funds or membership fees. State funding for CLSA cooperative systems currently supports primarily reference, delivery, and System Advisory Boards.

- Identify ways to increase the flexibility and efficiency of systems.

CSL: This is an excellent idea but, again, in terms of state funding, greater flexibility most likely will require revising or amending CLSA regulations or statute, which are fairly prescriptive in how CLSA funds are to be spent.

- Look at the issue of equity: are there ways to achieve greater equity between rural and urban and among the different systems?

CSL: Looking at individual library jurisdictions and not cooperative systems, the LSTA-funded Rural Library Initiative grant has attempted to provide greater equity for rural libraries, especially in the areas of training and communication.

In terms of state funding, the Library of California Board sets the formula policy for Reference and Delivery/Communication allocations, which is where most of the state funds are spent. The Reference allocation formula is based on population and the number of members per system; the Delivery/Communication allocation formula is based on the number of members per system and the geographic distances between them. We would welcome suggestions of other allocation methodologies.

- Analyze the whole structure to identify areas for improvement. Consider a distributed service model that would provide direct access to services (not through a cooperative library system) when feasible.

CSL: As mentioned above, we are investigating the possibility of certain system services being offered statewide instead of regionally, such as reference and delivery. It is important to remember that in a state as large, populous, and diverse as California, it is no simple matter to design and provide a service program that will satisfy the needs of all public library customers in California.

- Explore the feasibility of and support for expanding the systems to include other types of libraries, to create multi-type systems.

CSL: This was the intent of the Library of California. If the CLSA statute and regulations are eventually reviewed with the goal of updating the programs, services, and requirements, expanding membership to include non-public libraries needs to be considered.

Marketing and Promotion

- Develop a program of public awareness to ensure that the general public, community leaders, and elected officials understand libraries, library service, and cooperative systems.

CSL: The State Library and the professional associations have a long history of organizing public relations campaigns to inform the public about the value of public library services. The LSTA-funded "Check It Out" campaign from a few years ago is a good example, as is the Public Library Association's ongoing "Smartest Card" campaign. Currently, the California Library Association is investigating whether to develop a new statewide PR campaign.

All good P.R. starts at home. These state and national campaigns exist to assist local libraries in effectively educating their local communities about their services and why they deserve support. While many P.R. products and techniques will generally work in any library's public awareness program, each library must determine the best approach to reaching its own community.

While it is important for public officials to understand the role that cooperative systems play in enhancing local library services, is it necessary for the general public to know about CLSA and its network of systems, or is it more important to focus on the role of the local library? The primary customers of each cooperative library system are its member libraries.

- Develop a strategy to create a positive public image for libraries.

CSL: We intend to work with the California Library Association and the Public Library Association to develop or refine a public awareness program and strategy.

Service

- Design and conduct statewide user assessments to determine what the people of California really need and expect from library service.

CSL: Many of these have been conducted locally, regionally, and statewide over the past several years. We need to look at what has been done, what information is still valid, and what we still need to learn from our customers.

Standards and Assessment

- Develop sets of standards to enable greater consistency in performance across the state. Categories include: facilities, technology, staffing, and collections.

CSL: If the California Library Association, as the state professional organization, decides to develop standards for public libraries, the State Library will in all likelihood support and endorse what is developed. However, we are not interested in trying to enforce standards or to link them to state funding, other than what is prescribed in law.

- Establish a means to do outcomes-based assessment.

CSL: We have been using outcomes measurement as a formal planning and evaluation tool in many LSTA grants for the past several years. It is not clear what this recommendation addresses, but it would be worthwhile to analyze which cooperative system activities would be good candidates for an outcomes-based approach to evaluating their effectiveness.

Networking, Cooperation, and Collaboration

- Create communities of practice to bring people who do similar work or who have common areas of interest to together to network and to learn from each other.

CSL: Again, given the size of our state and the number of library outlets, this seems like an ideal activity to conduct on a regional basis, where the CLSA systems could facilitate participating libraries in determining which areas of interest would be most appropriate to consider.

IV. General Summary of Responses to the Four Questions

Many notes were taken in the focus groups. It proved to be quite a challenge to summarize the wealth of information gathered in such a short time. The summary below presents the highlights and general themes from the set of focus groups. It provides a general overview of the responses and is not inclusive of all remarks. California State Library staff assisted in consolidating all of the focus group comments into the summary.

1. What Works Well?
Networking, collaboration and collegiality among members
System committees – they provide an opportunity to share ideas and to get to know people
The credibility that systems have with politicians and city administrators such as the city manager and members of the city council
Delivery programs within systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is especially true where the principle of resource sharing is in place and people act on this principle • Courier service is great
Direct loan program and receiving the money to do it
Equal access via universal borrowing
Shared resources – catalog, database, as well as our expertise
Purchasing power of systems, especially for database purchases and in price negotiations
Reference referral program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent turnaround time for second level reference questions
Second level reference
Interlibrary loan funding and support is seamless and patron-generated at the consortium level
Flexibility in system programs – there is some choice in what gets done
The support and leadership from the State Library
Resource sharing – Supersearch
Transaction-based Reimbursement program encourages resource sharing
The California Libraries catalog because of the ability to search regionally and by type of library
Access to library resources – CLSA makes this transparent to users

2. What Does Not Work Well

<p>System Advisory Boards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is difficult to find volunteers • The boards are not given enough meaningful things to do • They need more focus and direction • Restructure the concept – we need a better model
<p>The public generally is not aware of the systems and all that they do. Some systems do well at promotion; others do not do well at this.</p>
<p>System websites should include a summary of their purpose and services. The websites also need to be a conduit for State Library information.</p>
<p>The uneven distribution of funds – smaller systems and smaller libraries are at a disadvantage</p>
<p>There is no support for libraries other than public libraries, i.e., school, county law, community college, academic, special are not included. There needs to be multi-type library focus.</p>
<p>The delivery program – there is a lack of adequate funding, a lack of infrastructure, and the service does not extend beyond an individual systems.</p>
<p>There is inadequate funding for System Administration.</p>
<p>The ILL/direct loan service because of static funding. It makes no sense from a patron's perspective. It is not a seamless service.</p>
<p>Orientation tends to be toward the top level in libraries. Line staff members are unaware of networks and what they do. Many have no idea what a cooperative system is and how it relates to their library.</p>
<p>There is not enough money. Services are not funded to a desired level. Improvements usually must be funded locally.</p>
<p>There is minimum support of electronic databases.</p>
<p>The deployment of new technologies and the management of them are not well supported.</p>
<p>Good things get developed but then are not deployed.</p>
<p>Administrative costs are high.</p>
<p>The money seems to be in the wrong categories and there is not flexibility to reallocate the money to where it needs to be. Programs are unfunded or under-funded. Funding is inflexible.</p>
<p>Geographic areas not as important anymore. They are a legacy of earlier days.</p>
<p>System reference referral does not work well. Second level reference doesn't turn around quickly enough. With the internet the current second level is more like old third level – questions are difficult and are of a research or specialized nature.</p>
<p>Plans of service – multiple year plans, reflect available funding – product and effort.</p>
<p>Program options do not reflect current technology or customer expectations.</p>
<p>Regulations restrict further consolidation of the 15 library systems.</p>
<p>Staff development is too ad hoc; it just seems to just happen.</p>
<p>We don't seem to come together to figure out new ways to do things because we are tied to the old ways. Legislation and regulations limit us.</p>
<p>Geographic and political barriers need to be addressed. Our customers don't care about geography or institutional funding (public, academic, etc.). We need to reframe our programs based on the customer's world view.</p>
<p>In those cases where a system director is handling more than one system there is too much duplication and pointless work.</p>

2. What Does Not Work Well (cont.)

Level of funding for collaborative ventures, at both state and local levels, is not sufficient.
Equal access is not yet a reality in certain areas of the state.
Reference and ILL turnaround time do not meet patron expectations.
Question Point/Ask Now is not working well enough yet and this prevents an opportunity for positive change.
The structure of CLSA needs to be updated.
Regional and intersystem resource sharing does not work as well as the resource sharing within a system.
The committee structure is obsolete.
Direct Loan Program – some libraries do not participate.
Inconsistent member fees.
Preservation of status quo – slow to change.

3. What Is Of Value to Your Members
Resource sharing because it is convenient and one collection which provides direct loans and system delivery
System reference program
The collective buying power enables us to save money
Seamlessness of service
Synergy of diverse libraries
Networking
Work of the committees contributes to member libraries
Strategic and long term planning
Marketing
Universal borrowing
A good delivery system
Access to other professional and services – system staff
Coordination of products and services
California catalog
Seamless, transparent access directly to the customers – database access, resource sharing
Transaction Based Reimbursement
Purchasing power
Improved and fully staffed online reference services
More local/grassroots programming
Full funding for direct loan and ILL
Multi-type inclusion in California catalog
Continued development of California catalog
More publicity for libraries – universal publicity
Do the most good for the most people
Speed of information/ease of access
Online access
Shared electronic resources
Having a wider professional library network
Training and continuing education for staff and public
Easily accessible resources
Commitment, energy, passion of participants
Clearinghouse for information

3. What Is Of Value to Your Members (cont.)

Access to popular stuff and to obscure stuff
Speed
Multiple formats
Self-service
Maintenance of effort
Better collections locally
Services to/for kids – reading, homework, after school activity
Data, information, facts
Access to other collections
New technology
Communication with the member libraries
Keeping the consortia local
Make things free, especially training
Videoconference council meetings to cut down on travel and ensure a quorum

4. Desired Changes
Use the newest and best technologies
Get more funding to support programs and services
Work to have new CLSA legislation enacted
Pursue the creation of a multi-type organization for cooperative systems
Address the Library of California Board issue by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better defining its role and responsibility • Appointing more practitioners • Letting the State Library run CLSA – there is no need for this Board
Find a hook (a meaningful program or service) that will energize the public and fund it
Create statewide databases
Find ways to have more flexibility in the design and efficiency of the systems
Scale programs to the local, regional and statewide levels
Sunset the System Advisory Board structure
Fund services, not systems
Keep everyone involved
Strive to achieve equity between rural and urban, among the different economic area, and among ethnic and cultural groups
Provide leadership training
Work to achieve funding stability
Gain better public awareness, with the general public as well as with elected public officials
Facilitate the development of standards, e.g., for facilities, technology, staffing, and collections.
Conduct statewide user assessments
Bring people together, who work at similar jobs, regionally and statewide for networking and training
Make CLSA more flexible in how the moneys are allocated
Conduct an inventory of what different systems are doing
Ensure follow through on demonstration projects to determine and publish the results
The State Library should educate us on trends for libraries
Transaction Based Reimbursement, ILL/direct loan should be transparent to patrons
Facilitate statewide database negotiation Discounted statewide collection of electronic databases
Move toward more patron-initiated services on their terms
Get more people involved in network awareness
Improve the delivery system
Restructure/consolidate second level reference

4. Desired Changes (cont.)
Improve AskNow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign and centralize it • Consider statewide approach, • Provide the staffing at the state level
Extend delivery – provide links to other systems
More multiple collaborations
Statewide website showing services available via systems
Statewide library card
More and more flexible funding
Low administration overhead with direct access to other library resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A distributed model (peer to peer)
Service expectations to match information industry and customer needs – flexibility
Outcomes-based, not process-based evaluation
Encourage changes (such as system consolidation)
Quick timeline for change
Full funding for Transaction Based Reimbursement resource sharing
Focus on funding services to our customers – use existing structures for delivery system if possible, do not create a new structure
Work to create a positive public image for libraries
Virtual or physical gathering place
Restructure CLSA to make it more relevant
More funding, matching funds
More consolidation and merging of systems where needed
More emphasis on intersystem resource sharing
More funding for training
More and consistent funding overall
Legislation should allow more flexibility
Support of innovation
State Library needs to coordinate the cooperatives for consistency of service. (For instance, Palm Springs has become an associate member of MCLS in order to receive training opportunities, emails about legislative news and State Library news none of which is provided by ILS.)
Make a decision about the Library of California so that cooperatives know where they stand and can plan their futures
Let people know how CALIFA and InfoPeople fit into the mix
Push the Smartest Card Campaign
Keep cooperatives as local as possible
Train the directors of the rural and remote systems

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