



BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES
MARCH 12, 2024 AT 6:00PM
CITY HALL LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM
THIRD FLOOR
1400 5TH AVE, SAN RAFAEL, CALIFORNIA

This meeting will be held in person. The meeting is being streamed live via Zoom:
<https://bit.ly/BLT-03-12-2024>

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Call: (669) 444-9171 and enter 834-8552-7173#

How to participate in the meeting:

- Provide comments in-person at the meeting. You are welcome to come to the meeting and provide public comment in-person. Each speaker will have 3-minutes to provide public comment.
- Submit your comments by email by 4:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. Comments can be submitted to jinder.banwait@cityofsanrafael.org.

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER – 6:00PM

MINUTES

1. Approve regular meeting minutes of February 13, 2024
Recommended Action – Approve as submitted

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

The public is welcome to address the Library Board at this time on matters not on the agenda that are within its jurisdiction. Comments may be no longer than 3 minutes and should be respectful to the community.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

2. Updated Designs for Downtown Library Renovation, presented by staff

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

If necessary to assure completion of the following items, the Chairperson may establish time limits for the presentations by individual speakers.

3. MARINet Staffing and Structure Analysis
Recommended Action: Receive and Comment

STAFF LIAISON REPORT

4. Other brief program updates or reports on any meetings, conferences, and/or seminars attended by staff.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

5. Other brief reports on any meetings, conferences, and/or seminars attended by the Board members

ADJOURNMENT

Any records relating to an agenda item, received by a majority or more of the Board less than 72 hours before the meeting, shall be available for inspection online and in the city hall large conference room, third floor, 1400 5th Avenue, San Rafael, California placed with other agenda-related materials on the table in front of the location prior to the meeting. Sign Language interpreters may be requested by calling (415) 485-3066 (voice), emailing city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org or using the California Telecommunications Relay Service by dialing "711", at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting. Copies of documents are available in accessible formats upon request. To request Spanish language interpretation, please submit an online form at <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/request-for-interpretation/>.



**City Hall Large Conference Room, Third Floor
1400 5th Ave, San Rafael, CA
February 13, 2024 – 6:00 P.M.**

Virtual Meeting Recording Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXRSlyS-iKE>

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Vahdat called the meeting to order at 6:01 P.M.

Roll Call

Present:

Trustee Andow
Trustee Cortes
Trustee Lee
Chair Vahdat

Absent:

Trustee Kyle

Also Present:

Catherine Quffa, Library & Recreation Director
Katie Port, Supervising Librarian
Jinder Banwait, Administrative Analyst

MINUTES

1. Approve Regular Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2023

Trustees provided comments.

The minutes of November 14, 2023 were approved as submitted.

Trustee Lee moved, and Trustee Cortes seconded to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2023 meeting.

Ayes: Trustees: Andow, Cortes, Lee, and Vahdat

Noes: Trustees: None
Absent: Trustees: Kyle
Abstain: Trustees: None

Minutes approved as submitted.

Chair Vahdat invited public comment; however, there was none.

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Public Comment from the audience regarding items not listed on the agenda.

None

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

2. Staff presentation on MARINet

Staff report by Katie Port, Supervising Librarian

Staff responded to questions from the Trustees.

Trustees provided comments.

Chair Vahdat invited public comment; however, there was none.

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

3. Library Operational Assessment

Staff report by Catherine Quffa, Library & Recreation Director

Staff responded to questions from the Trustees.

Trustees provided comments.

Chair Vahdat invited public comment; however, there was none.

STAFF LIAISON REPORT

4. Other brief program updates or reports on any meetings, conferences, and/or seminars attended by staff.

Presentation by Catherine Quffa, Library & Recreation Director

Staff responded to questions from the Trustees.

Trustees provided comments.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

5. Other brief reports on any meetings, conferences, and/or seminars attended by the Board members.

Trustees provided comments.

Chair Vahdat invited public comment for agenda item four and agenda item five; however, there was none.

NEXT MEETING: March 12, 2024

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 P.M.

DRAFT



**March 12, 2024
Item #3**

TITLE: MARINET STRUCTURE AND STAFFING ANALYSIS

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Trustees receive the report and provide comment.

BACKGROUND:

Formed in 1993, MARINet is a consortium of seven public libraries and two academic libraries in Marin County. MARINet (short for "Marin Automated Resources and Information NETwork"), operates as a Special District and was created as a Joint Powers Agency under the County of Marin. The MARINet Governing Board is composed of the directors of each of the nine member libraries.

At the January 2024 San Rafael Library Board of Trustees meeting, staff presented an overview of MARINet and the benefits that the Library and the community gain from being part of the consortium. As was indicated in the January presentation, MARINet has experienced recent changes that have motivated the MARINet Board to evaluate the operations of the consortium.

The JPA that governs MARINet was last updated in 1997, and the Board has had various discussions about pain points and opportunities to improve the way the organization operates. Following the retirement of the MARINet system administrator in late 2022, the MARINet Board hired Whole Mind Strategy Group to evaluate and develop recommendations for the structure and staffing of MARINet going forward.

DISCUSSION:

Through 2023, Whole Mind Strategy Group reviewed organizational documents, interviewed MARINet staff and Board members, facilitated a half-day Board retreat, and gathered data from other library consortia nationally.

Through their research, Whole Mind identified four key areas of concern for the consortium:

1. MARINet currently is insufficiently staffed. Particularly since the retirement of the System Administrator, MARINet heavily relies on one exempt staff member. Of particular concern is a lack of succession planning for this staff member as well as the increasing and evolving demands made upon MARINet by the member libraries.

2. MARINet lacks a clear strategic direction. The consortium has never had a strategic plan nor framework for making decisions. This has resulted in a lack of focus and follow-through, both for the Board and for MARINet staff.
3. Marin County Free Library (MCFL) can exert an outsized influence on the consortium. Under the current structure, the MCFL Director has approximately half of the voting power on the MARINet Board, which is based on their percentage of the cost sharing formula. While the current MCFL Director has adopted a collaborative approach to MARINet and has not used this structure to push forward initiatives that do not have broad support, Board members expressed concern that this may not always be the case.
4. Not all members value the role and potential that MARINet provides. Several MARINet Board members expressed that they view the consortium as more of an expense than an investment that yields an economic benefit through efficiencies and higher-quality service to the community.

In addition to identifying these areas of concern, Whole Mind also facilitated a strategic process with the MARINet Board to develop a purpose and principles for the organization:

MARINet's Purpose

To collaborate in planning, funding, and executing library functions to enhance access, harness efficiencies, and reduce cost.

MARINet's Principles

- ***Access:*** Make a consistent baseline of services available for all communities. Aspire to equity with targeted focus on the most marginalized communities.
- ***Locality:*** Give our staff and local communities a voice in shaping the collections, programs, services they enjoy.
- ***Strategy:*** Make informed decisions together to anticipate and address community needs.
- ***Collaboration:*** Build connections among staff to share information, solve problems, and provide support.
- ***User Experience:*** Provide residents with a positive, convenient user experience through shared and coordinated systems and processes.

Based on the four areas of concern and building on the purpose and principles, Whole Mind developed a matrix of staffing and structure recommendations in the areas of

governance, strategic direction, cost-sharing formula, staff leadership roles and responsibilities, workload and staffing, legal and organizational structure, collections and digital resources management, and user experience.

During the November 2023 MARINet Board meeting, Board members received the report from Whole Mind (Attachment 1) and discussed priorities moving forward. The Board subsequently formed four task forces to work on the various recommendations for the coming year. The task forces are:

- **Board Support Task Force** will be working to clarify roles and responsibilities of the MARINet Board, as well as to develop a structure around strategic planning and priority setting.
- **Staffing Task Force** will be working on updating the MARINet position descriptions, staffing structure, and hiring.
- **Organization Restructuring** will be working on integrating equity both into the consortium priority setting as well as the cost sharing formula.
- **Collections Management Task Force** will be looking at opportunities for collaborating on collections management, while still maintaining member's ability to tailor their collection to community interests.

As the Board makes progress on the priorities and recommendations, the task forces will evolve and shift their focus. The Board has already made significant progress since the task forces were created in the areas of clarifying Board roles and updating staff positions.

Submitted by:



Catherine Quffa
Library & Recreation Director

Attachments:

1. Staffing and Structure Recommendations Prepared for the MARINet Board of Directors

Staffing and Structure Recommendations

Prepared for the MARINet Board of Directors

**Eric Meade, Principal, Whole Mind Strategy Group
With Linda W. Braun, Principal, The LEO Group**

Oct. 26, 2023

Background

The MARINet Board of Directors stands at an inflection point in its capabilities and in its value for its members. Since its formation in 1993, MARINet has implemented numerous resource sharing opportunities for its members, including a shared library catalog, public library network connections through CENIC, support in digital collections management, delivery services to move physical materials around the county, and training and support for library staff. Following the recent retirement of the MARINet system administrator, the MARINet Board faces a set of decisions that will shape MARINet's capacity and services in the years to come.

MARINet's future is both promising and precarious. While MARINet has many opportunities to support its member libraries by taking on new roles that would increase the efficiency of the county-wide library ecosystem as a whole, the organization faces urgent challenges related to structure and staffing. Most notably, MARINet lacks sufficient staff to complete its work as currently defined. MARINet has only three staff, only one exempt employee, and no succession plan. If that one exempt employee were to leave, one can easily imagine that MARINet would struggle to function as currently constructed.

In this context, the MARINet Board hired a consultant team of Eric Meade of the Whole Mind Strategy Group and Linda W. Braun of the LEO Group to develop recommendations for the structure and staffing of MARINet going forward. (See **Appendix 4** for consultant bios) In particular, the consultants identified the following concerns:

- **Insufficient Staffing:** As noted above, the staffing of MARINet is not commensurate with the roles assigned to MARINet by its members. Projects are regularly placed on hold. Some tasks and services, like the management of Overdrive, the ebook delivery service, have increased in the time and attention they require. Added to this, the Help Desk function has expanded beyond its intended scope and now consumes several hours of attention each day. Recently, when the one exempt employee (the System Administrator) was out on vacation, a service disruption required the non-exempt staff to engage in urgent troubleshooting, for which they have no formal training, to get the system operational again. On top of all this, MARINet staff are often asked to take on additional projects for individual member libraries, even as essential tasks like training for library staff have dwindled over time.
- **Absence of Clear Strategic Direction:** The MARINet Board has never had a strategic plan and seems to lack a clear and actionable strategic framework or vision for making decisions. The Board often reacts to events rather than proactively setting a consistent strategic direction for the consortium. Emergent topics get added to the Board agenda, only to be replaced the following month as interest drifts elsewhere. As a result, some Board members, and member library staff, are unclear about the actual value MARINet provides, and could provide, while MARINet staff are left without clear guidance on how to allocate their time to the highest-priority issues and projects.

- **Outsized Influence of the Marin County Free Library Director:** Marin County Free Library (MCFL) pays approximately half the cost of MARINet and has approximately half the voting rights. (Additionally, MARINet is collocated with MCFL and the MCFL director has been conducting the performance evaluation for the MARINet system administrator.) Historically, some MCFL directors have moved MARINet in a certain direction just by finding one other library to vote with them, a dynamic the other members have referred to as “MCFL plus one.” While this is not the case under the current MCFL director, who seems to approach her role much more collaboratively than some of her predecessors, MARINet is highly vulnerable to the level of support and engagement of whoever happens to be MCFL director at the time. An MCFL director who did not support MARINet could easily introduce volatility and inconsistency into the consortium's strategy and operations.
- **Lack of Clarity and Vision About MARINet's Role and Potential:** Several MARINet library directors view the consortium primarily as an expense rather than as an investment that yields an economic return through greater efficiency and a higher-quality user experience. They also overlook its potential to extend each individual library's reach and increase access. The member libraries persist in duplicating tasks that could be done more efficiently at a consortial level, such as purchasing and collections management. Paradoxically, members want MARINet to create a more seamless user experience, even as they wonder why residents do not realize that there are multiple libraries in the county.

By addressing these concerns, MARINet can position itself to provide greater service and efficiency to its members in the years to come. Recommendations for doing so are provided below.

Methodology

MARINet embarked on this process in search of practical, achievable, and realistic recommendations for revisions and adjustments to the organizational structure of the organization. To develop these recommendations, the consultant team reviewed organizational documents and conducted interviews with all MARINet Board members, all three MARINet staff, three MARINet working groups, and two external stakeholders. The consultants also researched other library consortia from across the country, including conducting interviews with four consortium leaders, to identify approaches relevant to MARINet.

During this research, “best practices” for library consortia proved elusive. Each consortium approaches its role in its own way, taking on some tasks and leaving others to the member libraries themselves. All consortia contacted provide an ILS, but some use open source (e.g., Evergreen) while others use a traditional vendor (e.g., Innovative). Some consortia provide technical training to library staff, while others expand this to include professional development. Consortia also fund their activities in their own ways, using different cost-sharing schemes and

formulas to account for library size, resources, utilization, budget, etc. A compilation and analysis of the findings from these external interviews are summarized in **Appendix 1**.

Given the variety of approaches used by other consortia, the consultants treated the external research findings as a vocabulary of ideas MARINet could consider, depending on their own aspirations for the future. Before the consultants could propose recommendations for MARINet's structure or staffing, it was essential to outline what MARINet wanted to be and do in the years ahead.

To answer these questions, the consultants designed and facilitated a half-day workshop in which the Board members conducted a series of activities that engaged them strategically.

- First, Board members reviewed the evolution of MARINet in the context of global, sectoral, and institutional changes that have occurred over the past 20 years, such as globalization, the expansion of the Internet and social media, political polarization, and the rise of ebooks, audiobooks, streaming services, social media, etc. This review highlighted what MARINet accomplished successfully in the past as well as the issues that they will need to address in the future.
- Second, Board members developed a purpose for MARINet to pursue that is consistent with its past but appropriate for its future, and they developed the principles by which they hope to accomplish this purpose. Unlike hard-and-fast goals, principles are behavioral aspirations that guide action without prescribing it¹; thus, they are appropriate strategic constructs for complex, changing environments where the correct course of action cannot be known for certain in advance. Given that MARINet has never had a strategic plan, this activity surfaced important conversations for the Board to have, on topics where the Board members had rarely if ever shared their divergent perspectives.
- Third, Board members applied the purpose and principles to the various components of MARINet's model, such as governance, cost-sharing, staffing, ILS maintenance, and managing patron records, etc., to essentially design the kind of organization that would be pursuing their purpose in line with their principles.

Following this workshop, the consultants compiled and refined the Board's outputs in order to generate a set of recommendations, drawing as well upon the consultants' research of other consortia, that fits MARINet's unique circumstances and how the Board would like to proceed.

¹ One well known principle is, "Honor thy father and mother." This principle provides clear guidance, but does not prescribe any particular behavior. For example, one person may enact that principle by saying, "When Mom gets old and frail, she's going to come live with us," while another person may enact that principle just as well by saying, "When Mom gets old and frail, she's going to go to a facility where she can get the care she needs." Using principles rather than goals ensures strategic consistency while also allowing for the flexibility that is required when situations vary or are impossible to predict.

Submitted by Whole Mind Strategy Group, LLC

October 26, 2023

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Tiered Strategic Options for MARINet

The following table lists the key findings identified by the consultant team and proposes steps MARINet could take to address the findings. The proposed steps are distributed across three “aspirational levels,” which can also be seen as MARINet’s appetite for change. The first “aspirational level” includes steps that the consultant team believes MARINet must take in the near future in order to alleviate understaffing, establish minimal strategic coherence for the organization, provide for an appropriate level of governance by the Board, etc. The third and highest “aspirational level” describes steps that would be consistent with greater collaboration among Marin County’s libraries through MARINet.

Recognizing MARINet’s current circumstances, the consultant team has shaded in **RED** and **ORANGE** those activities that warrant immediate consideration. Those shared in **RED** are considered “must-haves,” or implementation of “best practice” for most organizations, while those marked in **ORANGE** are specific to MARINet and its purpose, principles, and strategic context. The bracketed numbers align to the recommendation numbers in the table in the subsequent section, starting on p. 12.

Findings	Aspirational Level #1 Providing Basic Sustainability	Aspirational Level #2 Strengthening Value and Efficiency	Aspirational Level #3 Striving Toward Excellence
Governance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board member responsibilities are not clear, leading to confusion and reducing engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [1] Write a formal Board member role description listing core responsibilities; include the nonprofit Board member duties of loyalty, obedience, and care [2] Develop and implement an effective onboarding process for new Board members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [1] Include Board member job description in library directors’ job descriptions at their own libraries [3] Create a “buddy” program to pair new Board members with experienced peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct semi-annual Board development activities (e.g., training, self-evaluation) to strengthen governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given MCFL’s disproportionate role in cost-sharing and voting, MARINet is highly dependent on the level of support and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [11] Clearly transition oversight (e.g., performance evaluation) of MARINet staff leadership from MCFL to the MARINet 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute 50% of voting power equally among the members, and distribute the other 50% based on the cost-sharing

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engagement of the MCFL director	Board. The MARINet Board hires staff leadership and conducts her/his annual performance review		formula ² (not including any adjustment for equity) ³
Strategic Direction			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MARINet has never had a strategic plan; priorities tend to shift from month to month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [4] Conduct an annual planning process to set priorities for the year, then work to the plan; at its most basic level, this plan could capture the existing projects and commitments and detail the steps to advance them over the coming 12 months; the plan may also include initiatives stemming from this report; include an update on the annual plan activities in the Board packet for each Board meeting, and discuss as an agenda item as appropriate; establish a disciplined process for adding emergent topics to the Board agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [5] Develop a three-year strategic plan; this plan would start with the Purpose and Principles and would identify significant initiatives to be completed over the coming three years, likely based on: an environmental scan of trends in the field, a review of community data to identify needs, and a review of organizational capabilities; evaluate progress and make adjustments to the plan, as required, every quarter; use this planning cycle to increase discipline in Board-level discussions, creating a higher threshold for adding initiatives or priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use community-based data from member libraries to proactively address community needs through localized, equity-based services. • At least quarterly, engage the Board regularly in “generative” conversations about the future, perhaps facilitated by an external consultant to ensure the inclusion of new perspectives/thinking; this could be a discussion of trends, new innovations, or emerging practices of other consortia,; one of a Board’s responsibilities is to look out over the horizon in order to remain strategically alert to changes in the operating environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unclear who is responsible for strategic leadership—Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [11] Assign strategic leadership as a shared responsibility of the Board and staff leadership, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [12] Empower staff leadership to implement the strategic plan with an approved annual 	

² This would be akin to the “Great Compromise” design of the U.S. Congress, in which representation in the House of Representatives is based on population while representation in the Senate is equal for all states.

³ A municipality should not have its voting rights reduced just because it is lower income.

<p>or staff—and neither does it effectively</p>	<p>enacted through the development and implementation of concrete plans subject to periodic review, as discussed above</p>	<p>budget, no longer requiring unanimity for all financial decisions</p>	
<p>Cost-Sharing Formula</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several member libraries—well-resourced and not—believe they are paying too much; viewing MARINet primarily as an expense, they may not recognize the consortium’s full potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [9] Use hard numbers to develop the business case/value for MARINet as a vehicle for increased efficiency in its current and potential roles; communicate this value to library directors and their municipal supervisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen MARINet’s brand in the community (e.g., by co-branding with individual libraries); communicate MARINet’s value broadly to County leaders and residents, e.g., through an annual report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine core library functions (issuing cards, managing collections, etc.) at the consortium level to provide a seamless user experience; create a shared brand for all MARINet libraries rather than using distinct identifies; individual libraries still maintain collections and services relevant to local interests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the factors in the cost-sharing formula may become less relevant with shared collections management and other developments • The cost-sharing formula does not account for income disparities in the county despite MARINet’s principle, “Aspire to equity with targeted focus on the most marginalized communities.” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [6] Include per capita income as a factor in the cost-sharing formula to adjust for equity; apply to each library’s cost-sharing percentage a factor equal to one-fifth of their service area’s divergence from the per capita income of the county as a whole, then normalize so that the sum of percentages is 100%⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate factors like circulation and collections that are less relevant in a seamless, largely digital, county-wide library system; calculate cost-share based on total population, adjusted for per capita income

⁴ Based on current figures, this would increase the cost-sharing of the most affluent municipality by approximately 10%, while reducing the cost-sharing of the least affluent municipality by 5%, a mild adjustment to advance MARINet’s principle of “aspiring to equity.”

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MARINet does work for individual libraries, but without any system to track the projects or the time/resources required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [7] Create a ticket system (e.g., using a commercially available project management software) to track ticketed projects and the time/resources required; on an annual basis, evaluate the equity of the time allocation and the impact on other MARINet activities; institute policies as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [7] Develop pricing for the individual projects completed through the ticket system, creating a separate revenue stream for MARINet that accounts for the time and effort expended 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCFL provides (technical and staff) support to MARINet that is not accounted for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [8] Create a system to track other additional supports provided to MARINet by MCFL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop cost-based pricing and have MARINet compensate MCFL for a certain percentage of these extra services; also, consider other providers of these services within the community 	
<p>Staff Leadership Role and Responsibilities</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems Administrator role has evolved beyond that, with many strategic, technical, and administrative responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change title to Executive Director, with no changes in job description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [10] Change title to Executive Director and revise job description to include a greater role in strategic direction and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support by additional staff, foster greater external engagement (networking, conferences, etc.) by the Executive Director to stay abreast of trends and emerging issues in the field
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Systems Administrator often interacts with County leadership indirectly through MCFL, despite MARINet's status as a special district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [10] Foster direct contact between MARINet staff leadership and County leadership 		

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Workload and Staffing			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organization is significantly understaffed, in particular since the retirement of the previous Systems Administrator; staff include one exempt professional and two non-exempt clerical staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [12] Hire one additional exempt employee and distribute the workload (a role is proposed in the following row) [15] As a short- or long-term solution, leverage current and new working groups to shoulder some of the burden, e.g., creating FAQs, delivering training; as part of this process, review working groups' mission and goals and evaluate role within the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [13] Hire a second additional exempt employee and distribute the workload at more reasonable levels (a role is proposed two rows below) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current staff lack heavy technical skills required for overseeing some of MARINet's contracts and investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [12] Hire a technical and training specialist with responsibility for managing technical services contracts (CENIC, Marin IT, etc.), providing training to library staff, developing FAQs to reduce help desk inquiries, and identify opportunities to make the user experience more seamless⁵ 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overdrive management has grown as a MARINet responsibility without sufficient staffing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [13] Hire a full-time collections manager for Overdrive and digital resources⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [13] Expand the collections role (including physical books) at the consortium level; hire an additional staff member for this role, if required; consider 	

⁵ This likely only requires repurposing an existing full-time position recently vacated by the outgoing System Administrator.

⁶ To facilitate this hire, consider outsourcing the core responsibilities of one of the non-exempt clerical positions once it becomes vacant.







		leveraging a working group as part of the transition	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help desk inquiries require an undue amount of the System Administrator's time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [14] Scale back the availability of the help desk; create the expectations that library staff will find answers to most of their own questions; develop FAQs and training to support them 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no succession planning for staff leadership, and the organization could essentially cease to function if the System Administrator left 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [12] Hiring another exempt staff member (the technical and training specialist noted above) would provide continuity of operations when the System Administrator is away or if she left the organization • [16] At the Board level, develop a contingency plan to ensure MARINet's continued operations in the event that senior staff roles go vacant 		
Legal and Organizational Structure			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MARINet has an array of governing documents (JPA et seq.), producing a confusing governance structure; affiliate (academic) members vote in Board decisions though their membership agreements do not support that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign a new JPA to clarify the relationships among public library members; sign new agreements (in line with the existing relationships) with academic library affiliate members under the new JPA structure (see Appendix 2) 		

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MARINet is intertwined with MCFL in multiple ways (collocation, performance evaluation, disproportionate voting rights), leading to confusion of roles and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [10] Foster direct contact between MARINet staff leadership and County leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider fiscal sponsors for MARINet other than the County/MCFL; develop a cost-benefit of the various options for Board consideration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If appropriate, set MARINet up as a separate government agency, as an incorporated nonprofit, or with a new fiscal sponsor
<p><i>Collections and Digital Resources Management</i></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing and collections management are inefficient across the MARINet member libraries, with little coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [17] Develop purchasing guidelines for member libraries to create an optimal county-wide collection and leveraging the unique strengths of local communities and their libraries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [13] Hire one exempt MARINet staff person to do purchasing and collections management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a floating collection, with local libraries having discretion to add collections of local interest
<p><i>User Experience</i></p>			
<p>Board members want to provide users with a seamless experience, but they also complain that residents don't realize there are multiple libraries; this is a key strategic tension for the Board to resolve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [5] As part of the annual planning process, identify the baseline of services that will be available to all county residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [18] Establish consistent policies, nomenclature, and conventions (e.g., age ranges, labels on bestsellers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position MARINet as the single library system of Marin County, providing a seamless user experience; elevate the MARINet brand over the individual libraries, and move more functions to MARINet staff





Discussion & Implementation

The options selected above have been consolidated into the following recommendations for implementation.

Recommendations	Resource Intensity
Governance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [1] Write a formal Board member role description and include it in library directors' job descriptions <i>A consultant could develop the role description based on "best practice"; each Board member would need to take action to append it to their own job description, with their supervisor's approval.</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [2] Develop and implement an effective onboarding process for new Board members <i>This could be developed by staff, or by a consultant if staff capacity is limited.</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [3] Create a "buddy" program to pair new Board members with experienced peers <i>Assigning the pairs is easy; what requires a little more effort is to specify the duties of the role and to make sure that buddies are actively mentoring their junior partners.</i> 	
Strategy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [4] Institute a coherent annual planning process with clear priorities; include a plan update in each Board packet; establish a process for adding emergent agenda topics <i>This could be completed as a standalone activity, likely with some consultant support, but if MARINet develops a three-year strategic plan, the annual plan would be produced during that process.</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [5] Develop a three-year strategic plan; identify baseline of services available throughout the County; evaluate progress and adjust strategies as appropriate; use the plan to anchor Board-level priorities and discussions <i>Consultant support would likely be needed to facilitate this process, by the strategic plan could build upon deliverables already created, such as the purpose, principles, and these recommendations.</i> 	
Finance & Cost-Share	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [6] Adjust cost-share for one-fifth of each library's divergence from the County's average per capita income, by approving a new JPA (see Appendix 2); then sign new contracts with affiliate (academic) members with terms similar to the current contracts; it is recommended that the per capita income adjustment not apply to affiliate members <i>The one-fifth calculation, based on current data, yields a maximum increase in cost-share of roughly 10% for the most affluent municipality. We believe this would</i> 	

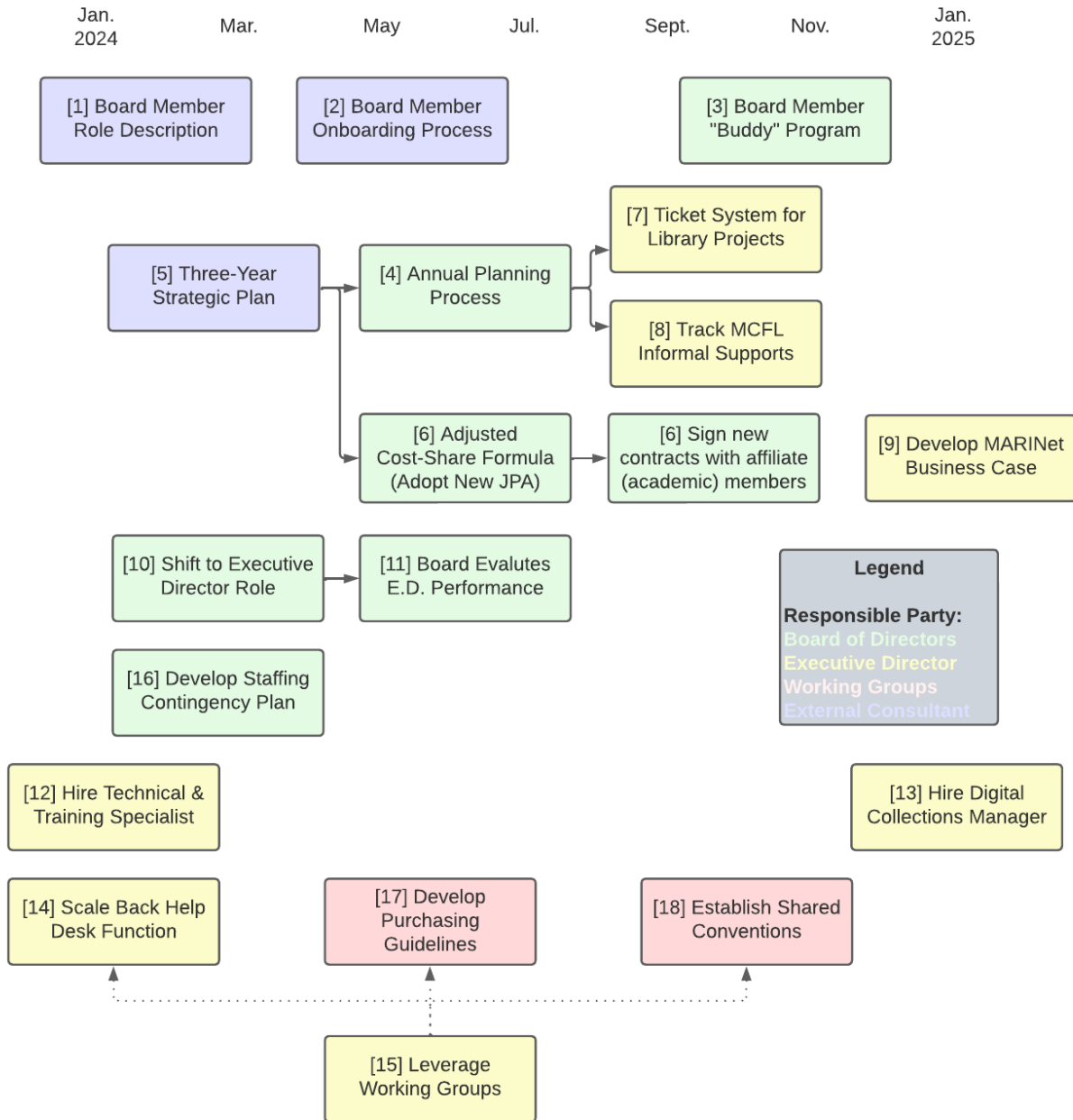
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<p><i>reflect MARINet's stated value of "aspiring to equity" without overburdening any particular member. Making this change would require communications with each municipalities' leadership, and then a revision of the JPA.</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [7] Create a ticket system for library-specific projects, then charge for that labor <i>There are a number of software options available to do this, such as Freshservice and Request Tracker.</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [8] Track the additional supports provided to MARINet by MCFL <i>MCFL may already have management systems in place that could be used for these purposes.</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [9] Develop a concrete business case to show MARINet's values to members <i>Much of this data may already exist within MARINet's system and will just need to be presented in a new way.</i> 	
<p>Workload & Staffing</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [10] Convert "System Administrator" to "Executive Director," with a revised job description (see Appendix 3 for sample), greater direct contact with County leadership, shared responsibility (with the Board) for strategic leadership, and the power to enact the annual or strategic plan according to a Board-approved annual budget <i>This will require two external steps:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Going through County HR to change the title and revise the job description</i> ○ <i>Revising the JPA, which currently requires unanimous Board approval for all spending decisions, which can unduly slow down MARINet's operations</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [11] Have the MARINet Board evaluate the Executive Director's performance <i>Need to talk to County HR to find the best process for submitting the resulting evaluation (e.g., via MCFL or directly to County HR).</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [12] Hire an exempt Technical and Training Specialist <i>This new hire could also serve as a back-up to the Executive Director.</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [13] Hire a full-time collections manager for Overdrive and digital resources; consider expanding this person's responsibilities into physical collections <i>Much of this work is already being done by one of the non-exempt staff, with support from the System Administrator.</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [14] Scale back the availability of the help desk; create the expectations that library staff will find answers to most of their own questions; develop FAQs to support them <i>This would require communications from MARINet, along with support from all of the library directors. Developing some initial FAQs, possibly with support from the working groups or from the previous System Administrator, would likely make this shift more palatable to library staff.</i> 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [15] As a short- or long-term solution, leverage current and new working groups to shoulder some of the burden, e.g., creating FAQs, delivering training <i>This will require significant staff time to stand up and manage these working groups, so revisit this possibility if the hiring of the Technical and Training Specialist does not proceed quickly.</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [16] At the Board level, develop a contingency plan to ensure MARINet’s continued operations in the event that senior staff roles go vacant <i>This may require little more than a Board discussion, potentially facilitated by an external consultant.</i> 	
<p>Other Opportunities</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [17] Develop purchasing guidelines for member libraries to create an optimal county-wide collection <i>These guidelines would rationalize purchasing across the County, more accurately aligning holdings with actual demand. This work could be done by an existing or newly formed working group.</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [18] Establish consistent policies, nomenclature, and conventions (e.g., age ranges, labels on bestsellers) <i>This step would make the user experience more “seamless,” which was expressed as a Board member aspiration in the principles. This work could be done by an existing or newly formed working group.</i> 	

Accomplishing these recommended activities will require a significant, though not necessarily overwhelming, amount of work. With sustained focus and attention, MARINet can accomplish these recommendations and put itself in a better position within a short period of time. The overall process for accomplishing these recommendations should receive regular Board attention; updates should be provided at each Board meeting until the work is complete, and some of the activities will actually require time and effort on the part of the Board. A potential sequencing of these activities over the coming year, color-coded to indicate the responsible parties, is provided in the graphic below.

Sequencing of Recommendations Through January 2025



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Conclusion

Deciding what you should do is often easier than doing it. Many of the recommendations in this report come from discussions with MARINet Board members and staff, many of whom have a clear vision of the value MARINet could provide to its members in line with its principles of access, locality, strategy, collaboration, and user experience. Other recommendations come from the consultants' own prior experience working with other organizations, including libraries and library consortia, but these recommendations have met with initial approval from several of the MARINet Board members, which suggests their relevance and utility.

The obstacle to enhancing MARINet's value, therefore, is less in confusion over what to do than it is in any organizational reluctance to take the next step. For example:

- Are MARINet members ready to shift their mindset from seeing MARINet as an expense to seeing it as an important investment in their own efficiency and in the efficiency of the County's library ecosystem as a whole?
- Are MARINet members ready to fund the level of staffing required to ensure the organization's near-term viability and to create a foundation for its future success in serving its members?
- Are MARINet members ready to engage in a process to create clear, long-term strategic priorities for the organization, and then to empower the organization's staff leadership to apply an approved annual agenda to pursue them?
- Are MARINet members ready to take the tangible step of embedding their aspiration to equity within the cost-sharing formula?

From what we have seen, we are optimistic that the Board members possess the passion, motivation, and competence to say yes to these questions and to realize MARINet's promise in the years to come.