

SITKA ILS Committee

Recommendations for an Organizational Structure and Legal Model for service delivery by the BC Libraries Cooperative

The SITKA ILS Committee is recommending to Library Boards a consortium organizational structure, governance and legal model that is comprehensive, flexible and scalable; one that dovetails nicely with core library culture.

Service Management Agreement

The mission, goals and operating rules of the consortium are contained in the Service Management Agreement (SMA), which in turn, flows from the Memorandum and Rules of Association under which the consortium will be incorporated. Each participating library will pay a one-time fee, sign a membership agreement and agree to abide by the terms of the SMA.

Democratic Model:

The SMA uses a hierarchical structure with a Members' Council, (MC) of participating libraries at the top-most position of authority which is responsible for overall decision-making. This is achieved through equitable (weighted) voting conducted either annually or semi-annually.

Below the MC and elected from its constituents is an Board of Directors (BOD). The BOD is responsible for day to day operations (issues prioritization, communication/liaison, preparing votes and agendas for the MC, etc.). Below the BOD is one or more Business Function Groups (BFGs) consisting of member libraries that are consuming a particular service offering such as Evergreen. BFGs are responsible for providing input and feedback on system performance, features and for identifying issues to the BOD and MC. If and when other service offerings are added, each will constitute a new BFG.

The SMA also provides for standing and ad hoc committees and working groups to support the work of and make recommendations to the BFGs and Board of Directors.

Operations:

An Executive Director's office provides secretariat, administrative and operational support to the organization and consists of permanent and temporary employees/contractors whose responsibilities are for the care and feeding of the consortium. The SMA is a comprehensive document and details the service levels, security, privacy, fees and other technical specifications needed for operational purposes. The SMA guides the work of the Executive Director's office and is the key reference for all matters arising out of the consortium's operations.

Legal Model – Cooperative Association

Typically, a public body organization of the type envisioned by this cooperative of BC libraries migrates toward the benefits (including liability protection) and lesser obligations of a Not for Profit Organization (NPO), usually under the Society Act. Benefits of this model include less rigid rules around articles of incorporation, reporting and filing; NPOs can also accept donations, and if registered as a charity with the Canada Revenue Agency, provide tax receipts.

Registered cooperatives are a compelling alternative. They offer all the benefits of a NPO under the Society Act plus two key benefits that are unavailable to Societies: proportional voting and distribution of surplus funds to members. Cooperatives exist to promote the economic success of their members and this economic linkage creates reciprocal incentives for the cooperative to serve its members and for the members to patronize the cooperative.

A cooperative model is also more in keeping with the culture of reciprocal-assistance that is at the heart of the library community and will encourage patronage by libraries from a range of sectors.