

## Section VI: Recommendations

### 1. Introduction

The Needs Study Team summarizes the recommendations in eleven broad categories. The recommendations are focused on two important issues: developing planning strategies for the sustainability of the current technology platform and creating equity of access for all libraries and thus for all Texans.

### 2. Key Recommendations

The following recommendations are discussed in the following section. The last section of the report discusses the near term grant programs that might be developed to begin to address these recommendations.

- Sustainability
- Security
- Planning
- Anywhere/Anytime Access
- Incentives
- Training
- Awareness
- Measurement
- Collaboration and Leveraging
- Equity of Access
- Proven Practices

Obviously, Texas libraries have many needs, only some of which can be addressed by TIFB funding. Over the longer term, the Needs Study Team recommends that the Library Working Group channel its energies into finding ways to work with TIFB and the broader library community to implement these recommendations. Where appropriate we have linked related recommendations that should proceed in tandem.

#### ***Sustainability Recommendations***

*Changes in library infrastructure, information content, and staffing requirements have been so large and sweeping that the time horizon for full integration will stretch at least another 10 years into the future. As access to the Internet and online resources increasingly becomes a “public good” there must be a means to sustain these resources equitably for use by all Texans.*

- As a first priority, the Library Working Group should endeavor to secure for the foreseeable future the funding needed to maintain the foundation components of TexShare and TLC databases where the foundation is the content, the hardware, and connectivity to access online databases. The importance of these resources to Texas libraries is primary; in order for libraries to adequately serve library users, there must be continuity in the funding of these resources. Loss of these resources would severely erode and restrict access to modern electronic information resources provided through libraries.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, local libraries working in tandem with relevant state agencies and other stakeholders so that everyone is co-responsible will ensure that Texas

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<sup>1</sup> For 60% of the libraries that responded to the Needs Assessment Survey, those libraries are the only free local community access points. Therefore, equity of access over the long term is closely related to sustainability planning.

libraries have the technology base, the content, and the skills needed to provide modern, sustainable, networked library services for all residents.

- A first step in creating a sustainable infrastructure model should be the provision of “planning for sustainability” grants to existing TIFB grantees. The TIFB grant program should establish some funds for a library grantee equipment replacement planning strategy. While it is not feasible for the state to be responsible for all local equipment needs, state funding sources such as TIFB grants must play a key role in ensuring continued equitable access to electronic networked information. TIF, or another appropriate state body, must assume a continuing long term commitment to sharing with local entities the ongoing cost of equipment, connectivity, content, and training if the promise of better library service for all residents is to be realized. For example, every TIFB grantee institution could apply for a non-competitive grant in the third year after they received a TIFB grant to cover up to one-third of the replacement/enhancement cost of up to one-third of the TIFB funded infrastructure. However, sustainability is a broad concept and must be understood to include not only hardware upgrades, but bandwidth upgrades, software enhancements, adequate human resources, and a stable ongoing funding model.
- Given the rapidly expanding bandwidth requirements, particularly for academic and community college libraries, the TIFB Library Working Group should convene a “Library Bandwidth Forecasting Summit” for the purpose of identifying and forecasting library bandwidth needs through 2008.<sup>2</sup> This will give the Library Working Group better information to give the TIFB Board regarding bandwidth needs of the library community as part of the overall TIFB planning for connectivity. This could take the form of regional planning sessions and/or a teleconference to provide TIFB library grantees an input method and a worksheet to help them forecast bandwidth needs. In addition, the Library Working Group should endeavor to find out what other groups in the state are involved in forecasting in order to save time and coordinate efforts with other stakeholders.
- All sustainability planning should carry a collaborative component. The success of the TexShare/TLC database model based on shared access to expensive resources is the right model for Texas libraries as they look to sustainability of equipment and infrastructure as well as content and training.

### **Security Recommendations**

*The ability of many TIFB library grantees to adequately manage security issues shows signs of being outstripped by the pace of technological change.<sup>3</sup> The rapid deployment of modern electronic networked information resources and services has brought into sharper focus the need for a broad statewide approach to ensuring the critical library systems and information resources are secure from physical or virtual damage.*

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<sup>2</sup> Among school libraries, Needs Assessment Survey data seem to show that the Internet is emerging as the favored delivery system for distance learning. As distance-learning curricula increase in sophistication, bandwidth requirements will grow. Likewise, distance education capability is only present in 29% of public libraries. If public libraries are to be fully integrated into the education and information delivery network, adequate bandwidth must be available.

<sup>3</sup> “Providing the level of security that is expected of the public sector is another major hurdle. The success of 3-government will ultimately rest on the ability to protect the public interest and build public trust. TexasOnline therefore offers participating governments the highest levels of security and privacy possible. In this area, no cost has been spared, implementing isolated networks, multiple firewalls, continuous intrusion detection and response, multiple levels of encryption and physical and logical segregation of services” (Source: Texas Department of Information Resources / TexasOnline Program [http://www.dir.state.tx.us/egov/Program/overview\\_main.htm#4](http://www.dir.state.tx.us/egov/Program/overview_main.htm#4))

- The Needs Study Team believes that the Library Working Group can build on the ground breaking model of the TIFB community networking grants by adding grant requirements to mandate that participating institutions collaboratively develop sustainability strategies that will be mutually supportive. The Needs Study Team found a “silo” effect even within some institutions that had TIFB grants in more than one unit, but where intra-institutional collaboration was absent.
- Provide a grant program to assist libraries to master the capability to directly advise and assist TIFB library grantees with a wide array of technology related security issues to ensure the integrity and viability of TIF’s investments in infrastructure. All types of libraries would benefit from this security initiative.<sup>4</sup> It would be practical to address this in the framework of the proposed sustainability planning grants. In addition, the library community should work together to provide training for security and/or partnering with TIFB library grantees and/or other state agencies to issue practical security guidelines and strategies that could be effectively implemented locally. There is also a role (through the State Library) for central management of certain authentication mechanisms that can solve some security problems for libraries.

### ***Planning Recommendations***

*The rapid change in the fundamental library service platform brought about by the integration of new computer and networking equipment, new types of connectivity, and new information delivery models, such as TexShare and TLC, coupled with changing and expanding expectations of network savvy library users, brings into focus the need to help libraries update their planning model to reflect these new realities.*

- Provide planning grants that help the different types of libraries define appropriate basic technology platforms for modern effective information delivery and manipulation to most effectively exploit the networked infrastructure and online content funded by TIFB. At a minimum, the Needs Study Team believes that Texas libraries should offer library users the following basic platform:
  - Commercially vended electronic library resources that are carefully chosen and available anytime and anywhere through the library. Currently, the TexShare and TLC databases are seen as the minimum platform.
  - An up-to-date integrated library system that supports national and international technical standards for interoperability, either standalone or shared,<sup>5</sup> with cataloged library resources maintained in standard formats.
  - An easy to use, web-based search and retrieval interface application that integrates externally acquired resources seamlessly with those of the local library collection, in all formats. It is critical that the Library Working Group work closely with other stakeholders to integrate findings in this area that flow from the Library of Texas ZLOT Project so that TIFB libraries can take early advantage of approaches explored and developed by that project.
  - Library facilities equipped on-site with sufficiently up-to-date workstations and related infrastructure to be able to deliver full-text electronic information, including images and

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<sup>4</sup> The Needs Study Team found, for example, that libraries’ willingness to provide remote access to TexShare databases increased with the potential of having secure authentication through a state provided server.

<sup>5</sup> The Needs Study Team believe that over the long-term, shared integrated systems will serve smaller libraries well, where equipment and expensive technical expertise can be shared across several institutions.

sound, whether maintained on a local server or acquired from other sources, locally or to remote sites, in a secure system environment resulting in speedy electronic delivery of information in the library, to the home, office, school or other location of the user's choice.

### ***Anywhere, Anytime Access Recommendations***

*The new paradigm for information access is rapidly shifting to an "anytime/anywhere" model, requiring libraries to change their traditional service model from "will get it for you as soon as we can and you are welcome to pick it up at the library" to a new model that endeavors to deliver information the user wants at the time and place that the user chooses.*

- It is important to ensure that Texas libraries can acquire, store, manage, and provide wide access to a broad array of high quality, credible, carefully selected and well organized electronic information resources, whether locally produced or procured from external vendors.
- The Library Working Group should request a grant to identify the remaining problems associated with providing remote access to TexShare and TLC databases and resolve these problems through collaboration with the managers of the programs, the Texas State Library, and the Texas Education Agency. Failure to resolve these problems will hamper the use of these resources outside the walls of libraries; eventually external use of these databases will dwarf in-house use, but only if remote access is reliable, easy-to-use, and well supported. It may be desirable to fund a short-term 24/7 toll-free remote access hotline to track down, isolate, and resolve remote access problems.
- The Library Working Group, building on the data from the Needs Assessment Surveys, should communicate to the TIFB Board the emerging broadband needs in the library community through 2008. The penetration of this technology into libraries is uneven; grantees' ability to deliver images and audio/video resources will not advance unless libraries adequately plan now about how build out this capability. Obviously library connectivity enhancements will depend in part on the speed of adoption of this technology in other TIFB eligible entities and on the availability of local funding. For public libraries, in particular, attention to this issue will be critical since most public libraries do not operate within a larger Internet structure such as THEnet (Texas Higher Education Network).<sup>6 7</sup> Academic and school libraries are more likely to be connected to the Internet via larger umbrella service providers. Public libraries are often purchasing service from independent ISPs.
- Coordinate the resolution of remote access problems with virtual reference training for library staff members who serve remote library users so that users who do not physically come to libraries can receive the same standard of assistance and support that on-site users receive. While training and support of library users in the library is fairly well understood, the process of assisting, training, and supporting remote library customers needs careful attention if off-site library users are to receive high quality service. A practical strategy would be a TIFB grant

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<sup>6</sup> See the Lonestar Broadband web site for specific examples of how rural communities have addressed the emerging issues connected with gaining adequate bandwidth to provide up-to-date services. The LWG should consider some of the specific strategies used by these communities to generate ideas for sustainability planning in regard to Internet connectivity. (Source: Lonestar Broadband. Policy research project on telecommunications and economic development in Texas managed by the LBJ School of Public Affairs. URL: <http://www.lonestarbroadband.org/html/aboutus.htm>)

<sup>7</sup> The LWG should review the strategies recommended by the Public Utility Commission. See the presentation: Broadband Task Force Meeting, Strategies for Making Texas a Leader in Broadband Deployment, March 20, 2002 (URL: [www.tea.state.tx.us/technology/etac/campus\\_txstar](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/technology/etac/campus_txstar)) (PowerPoint – Download only)

training initiative (perhaps Discovery Grants) focused on the development and delivery of virtual reference services.

### ***Incentive Recommendations***

*There should be more incentives and matching requirements, as well as clear grant guidelines, to encourage local entities to assume funding responsibility for library technology services.*

- TIFB grant guidelines should clearly state that TIFB equipment will be treated the same as local equipment for purposes of maintenance and replacement.<sup>8</sup> In the longer term the use of matching funds and the inclusion of incentives into grants that reward upgrade and maintenance will result in a more sustainable library service platform. Follow-up on this aspect of the grant cycle in evaluating project outcomes will be important. There is evidence in some instances that TIFB funded resources are not necessarily maintained nor replaced in tandem with locally funded resources, but rather are seen as one time equipment acquisition. Focus group participants commented that their institutions did not in all cases consider TIFB funded equipment to be part of the local responsibility.
- Direct library grant incentives should encourage TIFB grantees to participate in the resolution of common problems. For example, TIFB grant guidelines could encourage the extension of Internet connectivity to non-networked libraries by funding incentive grants to community colleges or other TIFB libraries who reach out to these un-served entities to help them qualify for TIFB funding.
- The Library Working Group should identify those libraries, of any type, that have not received TIFB funds. The Needs Study Team notes that Texas libraries have almost universally had access to at least some non-competitive grant funds. In those cases where local infrastructure is weak, the Library Working Group should encourage the creation of a grant program to encourage libraries to seek partners or mentor institutions within existing collaborative systems that can work with these libraries at the local level and assist them to connect. Modest incentive grants to larger libraries, especially community colleges, academic libraries and large public libraries, could further this effort. For example, a community college could use such a grant to upgrade their integrated library system so that small school or public libraries could connect to it and use it as their online catalog.
- The Library Working Group should encourage the use of incentives to reward meaningful measurement and assessment of TIFB funded programs by favoring grantees in upcoming grant cycles if they convincingly outline the concrete benefits that library users and other stakeholders have already received as a result of TIFB funds and/or have a viable plan to conduct an assessment. These incentives ought to focus on expanding and securing existing successes, rather than innovations.
- There should be incentives offered through relevant grant cycles for libraries to collaborate and share locally developed strategies that effectively organize and present electronic information resources to the end user. While no single “portal” can serve all libraries, the new standard of library access is a friendly, accessible, trustworthy web site that organizes information, selects sites, and provides links to resources. Whether this web site is state funded, sourced elsewhere, and/or locally created and maintained, it will give the user the ability to find and request information easily and quickly from any workstation connected to the Internet. In addition, it will

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<sup>8</sup> The Needs Assessment demonstrates that TIFB funds have an effect on the ability of libraries to develop other sources of local funds. For example, public libraries reported that TIFB funds helped secure more local funds (city/county), more funds from Friends groups and foundations, and from other sources such as private or business contributions. Source: Question P.58

reduce the need for some types of database training. The outcomes of the ZLOT Library of Texas concept should be evaluated to determine how best to use the results of that project for the early benefit of all libraries. (Source: Murray and Moen. *Project Deliverable B: Technology Inventory and Assessment*. August 2002.)

- The Library Working Group should urge that new grantees adopt demonstrated “Proven Practices” as a way to shorten the innovation cycle. TIFB should give priority to library proposals that commit the grantee to implementing proven “best practices.” TIFB can assist grantees to replicate and adapt proven technology innovation strategies by making available on its web site a database of proven Texas-based best practices. This database, to be useful, should be weeded and updated at least annually because programmatic successes age rapidly. (See Appendix VI for Proven Practices)

### **Training Recommendations**

*The Texas library community is ready for new training approaches that take full advantage of the installed and evolving technology base and TIF’s investment in libraries to date. Study findings point to the need for major changes and improvements in training programs for basic, advanced, and ongoing training focusing on a very broad array of training needs. It is time to rethink programs that provide training and support to TIFB grantees, and indeed to all Texas library/media personnel, to ensure that basic fundamental needs are adequately addressed in a comprehensive way. No single organization can accomplish this complex task. The Needs Study Team recommends that effective library and information related technology training in the future should have these characteristics:*

- It should be coordinated statewide and should involve all those organizations and funding agencies that currently provide training services to Texas libraries.
- It should be delivered on demand over the web and/or using other anytime/anywhere methods such as web tutorials supported by audio conferencing.
- It should be targeted, practical and focused on actual library needs.

The Needs Study Team offers an overarching training recommendation and a series of more specific recommendations based on findings from the survey and focus groups.

### **The Overarching Recommendation**

The Library Working Group should urge TIFB to fund a Library Technology Education Planning Meeting for the purpose of identifying and harnessing collective resources and knowledge to build a long-term, sustainable, and coordinated state-wide program of technology related continuing education. The outcome of this meeting, at a minimum, would be (1) a clear definition of technology education goals for Texas libraries, (2) a description of preferred roles of the various stakeholders, (3) development of a mechanism to coordinate the various existing training efforts into a cohesive program, and (4) a plan for inventorying existing training resources, networks, programs, etc., that can be drawn together in a coordinated training effort.

The initial list of organizational participants in such a meeting, at minimum, should include:

- TIFB Library Working Group
- TIFB Library Program Officer(s)
- Texas State Library (TSL) Staff
- System Coordinators/Trainers
- Texas Education Agency (TEA) representatives

- Education Service Center (ESC) representatives
- Large institutional stakeholders such as major state universities, public library systems, etc.
- AMIGOS Library Services
- Higher education institutions offering degrees and/or programs in library, information, and media related fields.
- Representatives of foundations or other funders who have an interest in library technology advancement in Texas.

### ***Supporting Training Related Recommendations***

TIFB training for libraries should recognize at least these four tiers of training:

- Basic training in a specific concept, product, area (PC troubleshooting, web search engines, security concepts, etc.).
  - Intermediate/advanced training that would follow an initial introductory skills class or course.
  - “Refresher” or update training to help staff keep skills up-to-date.
  - Training on TIFB grant administration and broad policy issues (Filtering, copyright, technology planning and forecasting, etc.).
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- The Library Working Group should recommend that training for libraries be delivered in tiers and modules to cohorts of trainees that would allow trainees to identify what training content and level is most appropriate for each person and ideally to connect with other trainees at their level of skill, creating thereby TIFB Library Learning Communities. For the purposes of this report, “tiers” is defined as various levels of training such as basic, advanced, refresher, etc. “Modules” are defined as training components that stand alone, are well defined, and can be integrated with other modules as needed depending on user requirements. Ideally the content of training modules would be built on standard adult training concepts and could be delivered in several ways, such as online, or in a classroom setting; “cohorts” is defined as a group of learners with similar characteristics and needs who could proceed through training in tandem, creating a mutual learning network. The Library Working Group must first identify the target audiences for training and then recommend that training be addressed to “cohorts” from within those audiences. (Example: School library media specialists in large urban districts constitute a defined target audience.) A cohort of these specialists would be defined within a region, would receive training in tandem, and would be encouraged to collaborate throughout the learning cycle, possibly through online forums and teleconferencing.
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- The Library Working Group should work with TIFB funded libraries and other institutions and organizations to help spur the creation and implementation of a variety of technology related training strategies, with an emphasis on desktop delivery of training, at the time and place preferred by the trainee. Wherever possible, the library technology training curriculum should be built around short focused modules and should use or adapt existing materials to save time and money. (See the “Proven Practices” in Appendix VI for illustrative examples.)
  - There should be more focus on web-based classes that use local library computer laboratories and/or standalone computers to deliver content and provide hands-on practice. Findings from both the Survey and the focus groups confirm that the field is ready for this approach.
  - At least some web-based training modules should be available 24/7 where feasible. The Needs Study Team recommends that the successful TexShare database shared purchasing model should be enlarged to include statewide licensing of online training programs for common software packages that are available in many libraries. Initially these training components should

be available to staff and eventually, if proven successful, to all library users. (See the “Proven Practices” in Appendix VI for illustrative examples.)

- The Library Working Group should work with other library stakeholder groups to identify various target audiences. This will encourage more focused training programs that can be targeted to specific library staff needs. Initial Texas library/media training cohorts should include:
  - School library media personnel (librarians and support staff).
  - Academic library staff, including community college and medical librarians; examples of sub-cohorts include: administrators/managers; public service librarians; technical support librarians/staff; support and clerical staff who serve the public or interact with TIFB funded databases. These trainees could be grouped by function and region.
  - Public librarians and staff; example include administrators/managers; public service librarians and support staff; branch personnel; technical support librarians and staff). Size of institution should be considered in developing the cohorts.
  - Library stakeholders including trustees, Friends, donors, funders, and city and county administrators who need to learn about TIFB’s many benefits to libraries and Texans.
  - Information technologists and instructional technologists with whom librarians should closely coordinate. One way to encourage collaboration would be to create a combined cohort from these groups.
  
- Important training topics, as revealed in the survey and focus groups, that should receive early attention, center on these areas:
  - Training on how to use the databases and other electronic resources and how to integrate them into local efforts (Examples: Schools: How to integrate database resources into curriculum and use databases to prepare for TAKS tests; Public Libraries: Teaching users how to use TexShare databases or use library software to create a resume; Academic Libraries: Practical ways to work with faculty to help them learn about and integrate TexShare resources into their courses.)
  - Security issues (safeguarding and effectively managing and protecting TIFB funded resources, included hardware, software and connectivity.)
  - Training on information literacy concepts, especially evaluating the credibility and usefulness of electronic information from the Internet and other sources.
  - Training on how to maintain and update library web sites and make them more user friendly.
  - Intellectual property issues for staff and for the public/students.
  - Training on how to help the library user quickly learn to use library equipment, resources, access databases, navigate the Internet, and set up E-mail accounts.
  - Basic PC training and basic Internet resources such as search engines, web directories, online library catalogs, etc. (Not all libraries need this, but many do, especially those just now introducing electronic resources in their communities.)
  - Train-the-trainers (covering both adult training concepts and content specific help).
  - Training focusing on special user groups, especially seniors and ESL library users. (See “Proven Practices” Appendix VI for illustrative examples.)
  
- Many TIFB libraries cannot do group training for users or library staff during library hours because no local training classroom or training lab exists. The Library Working Group could suggest that TIFB address this training barrier in the following three ways:
  - Encourage and support the purchase of, or in some specialized areas the development of, tutorials and self-paced web-based training units for library users that can be administered with the advice and assistance of a staff member who understands the tutorial subject and has already mastered the tutorial.

- Inventory existing training resources in the Texas library community (expert trainers, training facilities, training software, training programs or documentation, network delivery methods and gaps) to take better advantage of what has already been accomplished and to distribute existing resources more widely, sharing expertise across library boundaries. Make the inventory available to library administrators and trainers. (See the Overarching Recommendation above for additional information on this idea.)
- Offer a grant cycle targeted toward libraries that need to do group or classroom training, but who lack the space, workstations, and other equipment needed to do so. Grants could be offered to equip these libraries with laptops on a cart that could be stored and used as needed. Successful models of this strategy are in operation in Texas now. A requirement of such a grant would be that the grantee library offer regular training opportunities to external users such as local citizens, other library staff, or teachers and students. Focus groups data show that some libraries must use their existing public access workstations for training, thereby limiting the hours that training can be offered to time slots either before or after library hours.

### **Awareness Recommendations**

*The ultimate success of a statewide effort to extend broad equitable access to modern electronic resources will be limited unless all Texans know about these resources.*

- The Library Working Group should encourage Texas libraries to create a vigorous public information program to inform Texas residents about the availability of high-quality, credible TIFB-funded TexShare/TLC online resources and the Internet connectivity available for all in local libraries. TIFB libraries could work together to inform Texas residents about electronic databases in libraries and promote the widest possible use of these resources. TLA and TEA could be partners in this effort as well as other appropriate organizations.
- The Library Working Group should review the recommendations from the *TexShare Communication Plan* and determine a course of action appropriate to working with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to implement the plan recommendations.
- The Library Working Group should consider piggybacking on the national **@ your library** campaign, funded by the American Library Association, to promote and encourage use of TexShare and TLC and to extol the benefits of the equipment, connectivity, and resources funded by TIF.

### **Measurement Recommendations**

*Broad public and legislative support for expensive public infrastructure development programs requires the recipients of such support, in this case, libraries, to convincingly demonstrate the benefit to Texas through robust and meaningful outcomes-based measurement and evaluation.*

- The Library Working Group should work closely with TIFB to strengthen the TIFB grant evaluation process as it pertains to libraries and base future evaluations on user outcomes and performance measures. The Library Working Group should support TIFB to:
  - Continue the quality assurance evaluation of grantees and add additional questions for each grant cycle that assess outcomes beyond the deadline and compliance monitoring requirements.

- Consistently map evaluation outcome questions across grant cycles for ease of comparison and data aggregation.
- The Library Working Group should help enhance the evaluation process for library grantees to provide feedback that will better show how TIFB's investment in library technology is working to improve statewide access to electronic resources and is helping the state meet access, educational, and instructional goals.<sup>9</sup> The Library Working Group should begin a process of defining outcomes that all libraries can strive to achieve and suggest measurement data points to be systematically collected.
- The Library Working Group should work to strengthen the TIFB technology training directed to libraries by basing future training evaluations on library technology competencies and/or instructional objectives. For example, pre- and post testing could be implemented so that data can be gathered on the efficacy of training.

### ***Collaboration and Leveraging Recommendations***

*The resource demands dictated by TIF's mandate to bring broad connectivity and equitable access to high quality information to all Texans will best be met when Texas libraries, working closely together and in cooperation with other stakeholders, discover new ways to build an excellent shared system in the most cost effective and cost efficient way with the least duplication of effort and expenditure.<sup>10</sup>*

- In order to encourage further cooperation among libraries, future library grant guidelines should signal that TIFB favors collaborative proposals for purchase and management of shared integrated library systems. This will extend and enhance the continuing emphasis of TIFB on cooperation among grantees and may lead to more effective sustainability.
- All institutions that receive TIFB funds from more than one grant program should be asked to ensure that personnel associated with the various TIFB grants meet, talk, and actively collaborate in order to gain maximum benefit from the funding going to the local agency and to reduce redundancy, competition, and duplication of effort. The Library Working Group should ensure that library grant recipients actively reach out to other grantees, within their own institutions and throughout their local area.
- Given the nature of TIFB's limited staffing, a feasible way to serve the continuing needs of many grantees for advice, consultation, support, grant development assistance, maintenance, and training, is through contracts or direct grants to larger TIFB grantees to supply these services. The Needs Study Team urges the Library Working Group to recommend that TIFB work directly with experienced grantees to capitalize on their knowledge and skill.<sup>11</sup>
- The Library Working Group should suggest that there be more collaboration with other state entities that could have a leveraging effect on the grants that TIFB provides. For example, TIFB, working with TEA, could recommend that school libraries and school library media specialists take an active partnership role in local school technology planning and implementation. Likewise, a similar recommendation should apply to public and academic libraries in their respective technology planning environments.

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<sup>9</sup> The Needs Study Team will provide the Library Working Group a white paper on evaluation as part of the final report.

<sup>10</sup> System is used here in a broad sense, not in reference to a specific brand vendor.

<sup>11</sup> Any legal constraints to such contracts would, of course, need to be reviewed.

- The Library Working Group should encourage TIF Board Members, staff, and grant recipients to reach out to Texas county, city, school, health, and university administrators, through relevant professional groups, to inform them of TIFB programs and benefits. In many cases, TIFB grants to libraries have beneficial effects beyond the library that may not be well understood by the public at large. A fact sheet or brochure summarizing TIFB's accomplishments should be developed as a tool for such contacts. Further, this would be a way to help local administrators understand the state's expectation of local investment to sustain the infrastructure improvements funded by TIFB. Accomplishments should be described in terms of their impact on actual library users, rather than on institutional objectives.
- The Library Working Group should take the lead in finding new ways to better integrate TIFB funding with other funding sources include E-rate, Gates Foundation programs, Tocker Foundation grants, and federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding. At a minimum, the Library Working Group and relevant TIFB leaders could initiate regular consultation with these entities. Alternatively the Library Working Group, working with the Texas Library Association, might host a "Texas Library Funders" colloquium to help identify gaps, reduce funding overlap, and increase integration.

### ***Equity of Access Recommendations***

*From its inception, TIFB has been working toward broad equitable statewide access to modern networked services; while great strides have been made, benefiting Texans of all communities, more work remains to complete the "final mile."*

- Given TIFB's mandate, the Library Working Group should look for innovative means to help complete the build out of the statewide infrastructure to bring connectivity to *all* libraries (including the presently unconnected libraries).
- The Library Working Group should work with TIFB and other relevant entities, especially TEA and TSL, in order to continue efforts to reach as many state residents as possible by bringing connectivity, equipment, and electronic content to every part of the state. In order to complete this library infrastructure build-out, TIFB should focus at least some future funding on identifying and targeting specific library communities of need within the library environment. Thus TIFB grants could be customized to more closely match local needs.
- The grant program should reserve some funding for very specific, broadly applicable programs that will serve all or most Texas libraries, regardless of what grants they have or have not received. In addition to database funding, two specific areas identified in the Study that fall into this categories include (a) training and (b) assistance with security issues related to equipment and databases. A grant project with specified objectives that address these areas could dramatically improve the situation; therefore many libraries could benefit, even libraries that have not gone through typical grant cycles. For example, a program to license training materials at the state level, available via TexShare, would help all libraries choose high quality training resources.

### ***Proven Practices***

*The speed of change in library related technology applications is accelerating. The Needs Study Team believes that Texas libraries will derive tremendous benefit from the systematic identification and application of existing "Proven Practices." The Needs Study Team has chosen the term "Proven Practice" in preference to "Best Practice." In the context of this study, "Proven Practice" means a program or service that is well developed and implemented in at least one library. The term "Best Practice" can be confusing unless specific standards are developed. The Needs Study Team has developed a template for describing "Proven Practices" that is used to capture information about the practices that are contained in*

Appendix VI. This is the first step toward creating agreed upon standards for what constitutes a “Best Practice.”

- The LWG should seek a sponsor for the housing and management of a database of “Proven Practices” that are applicable to Texas libraries. Such a repository could help libraries that wish to speed up the implementation of new technologies and applications by using or adapting strategies tried and proven elsewhere. This might be discussed in tandem with other topics at the Library Technology Training Meeting suggested under Training Recommendations above.
- The LWG should recommend a format for recording these “Proven Practices” that is standardized, descriptive, and contains all the information that a library might need to follow-up on learning more about the practice. See Appendix VI for a recommended format. A good next step would be the development more stringent guidelines to apply in including a practice in the “Proven Practices” database. Ideally, a proven practice would be selected for the database only if had been evaluated and is known to be effective based on a real evaluation of its efficacy. (See the web site of the New Jersey Office of Innovative Programs and Schools. This agency has developed straightforward method of identifying and disseminating “best practices” that meet specific standards. This method could be readily adapted for use with TIFB programs. URL: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/bp-ss/factsheet.htm>)
- The development of a “Proven Practices” database for Texas libraries should draw together existing data and resources on specific practices known to be effective as well as provide a means to gather and make available new practices and ideas that are implemented among Texas libraries. The Needs Study Team has provided a suggested format for documenting proven practices; see Appendix VI for illustrative examples, including a number of useful practices gathered from Texas libraries in the course of this study.