Date: January 11, 2019

To: ALA Conference Committee

From: Paul Graller, Conferences Services

Re: Model for Replacement of Midwinter

**Where are we now**

Over the past two years, ALA has conducted research into attitudes regarding the Midwinter Meeting. The motivation for this examination was the noticeable downward trends in member attendance and exhibitor participation and resulting declines in revenue generated by the event. Numerous surveys, group discussions and face-to-face interviews were conducted among members and exhibitors. Overall, it was clear that the negative perceptions of Midwinter were starting to negatively impact member perceptions of the Association.

Statistics show the decline in member participation has led to a parallel decline in exhibitor participation. This has impacted overall (gross) revenue, overhead recovery by ALA, and, due to the production costs involved, led to net revenue losses.

The options investigated included:

1. Elimination of Midwinter. This option was rejected for various reasons:

* Many members felt there was still need for a January education and networking opportunity.
* The value of the Youth Media Awards and associated activities.
* Exhibitors are interested in a venue to announce spring titles and introduce authors.
* ALA needs the revenue and associated overhead contribution.

1. Keep Midwinter basically as it is with minor changes. This was also rejected. It is obvious through the research that the downward trend is not reversible with minor changes. Minor changes could also lead to the further dilution of a clear brand for the event – a clear concern for attendees and exhibitor participants.
2. Replace Midwinter with a new event that meets the needs of attendees and exhibitors. This will allow ALA to:
   1. Present educational/professional development content that is curated and targeted to the needs of attendees while at the same time remaining distinct from division conferences, which is not permitted at Midwinter.
   2. Develop an event that can be more easily marketed by staff and understood by the marketplace.
   3. Bring an event to new cities and regions that may be underserved by ALA’s larger face-to-face educational offerings. This may also result in lower hotel costs for attendees.
   4. Motivate the staff and member leadership to create more meaningful opportunities for committee work outside of the traditional dependence on a Midwinter Meeting, while still accommodating high level governance activity for which face-to-face meeting time offers significant advantages.
   5. Allow ALA to limit production expenses by conducting the entire event within the convention center, contracting less space than the current Midwinter footprint.
   6. Generate revenue and recover overhead to support other activities of the association.
   7. Eliminate the current conflict at Midwinter of overlapping meetings and education.

**What are the next steps**

The proposed new event will bring together two important conversations – *Books, Media, & Authors* and *Leadership, Strategy, & the Future* – to provide unique offerings and let attendees pick the best mix of continuing education and development for their career paths. The Books, Media, & Authors track focuses on the traditional core of libraries – books, literacy, multimedia collections, and more. A perfect complement to the Youth Media Awards, Andrew Carnegie Medals Announcements, and RUSA Book and Media Awards Ceremony and Reception, this track will feature educational sessions and workshops that explore the collection, promotion, and evaluation of books, media, and other resources for children, teens, and adults. The Leadership, Strategy, & the Future track focuses on both the topics (what to know) and the skills (how to know) that library professionals need to lead for the future. This track will feature educational sessions, workshops, and discussions that explore new and emerging trends, changing contexts and circumstances, innovation and ideation, problem-solving, and teamwork and collaboration.

For there to be an appropriate amount of time to develop the content and a marketing plan, a final decision on the format and schedule needs to be completed by June of 2019. The goal would be to announce the new event in the fall of 2019 and open the abstract submission process in September of 2019. The program would be finalized, and registration and housing would open in March of 2020 for the event to be held in January 2021.

All future Midwinter contracted sites beyond 2021 will be evaluated for their strengths and weaknesses in hosting this new event.

Although the change to a “new event” is ultimately an ALA business decision, input from the ALA Conference Committee, units of the Association and members is welcome. I will be at the ALA Conference Committee meeting on Saturday, January 26, 2018 to present and hear feedback on the attached skeleton schedule which illustrates what the “new event” will look like. I have also attached drafts of a call for proposals and budget for the “new event.”

Two town halls will be held during Midwinter 2019 to provide an opportunity for units/members to discuss and provide feedback on the model. I will be present at both town halls.

**ALA Conference Committee Meeting—Saturday, January 26, 2018—10:30 am-12:30pm—Convention Center, Room 3B**

**ALA Conference Committee Sponsored Town Hall—Sunday, January 27, 2018—10:30-11:30 am—Sheraton, Cedar Room**

**ALA Conference Committee Sponsored Town Hall—Sunday, January 27, 2018—4:00-5:00 p.m—Sheraton, Cedar Room**