**TO:** PLA Board of Directors

**FROM:** Mary Hirsh ([mhirsh@ala.org](mailto:mhirsh@ala.org)) and Angela Maycock (amaycock@ala.org)

**RE:** PLA Professional Development Theory of Change

**DATE:** January 4, 2019

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:** Information

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:** Discussion

**DRAFT OF MOTION:**  N/A

**OVERVIEW**

In 2017, PLA fielded a survey to all its members as well as ALA members who work in public libraries to help inform PLA’s future continuing education and professional development (PD) offerings. The survey collected perceptions on 10 key competencies, the importance of these competencies to both library leaders and staff, and the skills necessary to meet those competencies. From these survey results, PLA worked to develop a professional development Theory of Change (ToC). The attached white paper discusses the ToC development process and its potential uses.

**KEY CURRENT ACTIVITIES/METRICS**

The first page of the ToC describes PLA’s approach to developing learning opportunities. The second page of the ToC articulates outcomes resulting from PD content—delivered across topics and through various modes—aimed at building competencies needed to assume four key roles: Data-driven leaders; Public library advocates oriented towards community needs; Stewards of the public library and its values; and Networked innovators.

The Theory of Change is not meant to be read as a linear process map. Rather, it describes linked outcomes that build toward the field-level goals. The outcomes themselves describe learning objectives embedded in PLA PD offerings. They are not necessarily standalone training topics, but skills to be developed through participation in an array of content offerings and prioritized by the learner.

Following the finalization of the ToC, PLA undertook a program mapping exercise to determine where there was existing content or opportunities related to each outcome, and where there were gaps for development. The attached Excel sheet maps the number of programs offered per outcome; the second page is an example of the detail for each outcome. A library school intern was engaged to review: PLA webinars from 2014 to the present; PLA conference programs and preconferences from 2014, 2016, and 2018; and ALA Annual and Midwinter programs and preconferences from 2014 to the present. She also examined the specific components of larger initiatives, such as Leadership Academy, to uncover more discrete learning objectives.

This exercise illustrated that PLA has been supporting the objectives and field-wide goals, albeit in a non-strategic way. For each objective, PLA is able to map back to numerous offerings*.* While many of these learning opportunities were presented as live conference programs, PLA is exploring ways to repackage webinars and other asynchronous content for strategic re-release. Future offerings will be deliberately aligned to the ToC outcomes.

One of the white paper’s main conclusions is the opportunity to use the ToC outcomes to create a PD pathways tool. PLA has heard from librarians that they would like to be able to track their PD. PLA would also like to demonstrate its own role in supporting advancement of the profession. A Pathways tool would enable librarians to chart a path of competency development that leads to new and more advanced expertise. It would also help PLA identify where it can play an enhanced role in supporting PD. The primary field-facing challenge of this will be convincing library staff that charting and then tracking a path is important and may lead to career advancement. This may include training on reading and adopting the ToC itself.

PLA seeks the board’s advice on how to present the ideas in the ToC as relevant, useful, and something to prioritize to the field at large.

**BUDGET**

Costs associated with the development of the ToC and related white paper were covered by Legacy Grant funds. Future implementation activities are not well enough defined at this point to assess budget implications.

**PLA STRATEGIC GOAL LINK (check all that apply)**

TRANSFORMATION  LEADERSHIP  ADV. & AWARENESS  E.D.I.S.J.  ORG. EXCELLENCE