NICE Project

Key Takeaways

The vast majority of stakeholders support an ILS merger of some sort. 93% of survey takers indicate robust interest in pursuing a shared ILS platform, with the majority favoring a shared platform and collection with a movement towards sharing practices and policies.

The patron experience matters. 95% of survey respondents felt a merged ILS would benefit or significantly benefit patron access to a larger collection. Focus groups also identified improved patron experience, including increased access and ease of use, as a key benefit.

The perception of merger benefits is higher than perceived concerns overall. Survey takers were more likely to give benefits a higher weight than concerns. It is important to note that concerns exist, but for many, a clear plan and transparent communication will go a long way in building support.

System staff and member libraries see an ILS merger impacting more than the collection. In focus groups, member libraries shared that they valued the services and people supporting the ILS and saw increased collaboration as a way to get timely support and grow connections. It was also seen as a way to continue to grow connections beyond the ILS. Member libraries and system staff saw the ILS as a gateway to other collaboration, learning, and connection-making.

Cost savings are possible. A review of ILS vendor quotes found that NWLS and WVLS would see cost savings for ILS vendors for the first few years. For year one, the systems could see potential annual cost savings of between $7,000 and $32,000, depending on the chosen vendor, and year two would see similar savings of between $2,000 and $33,000 if merged. Other cost savings may be possible over time.

Feasibility and NICE Team Recommendations

Based on the data and information, the NICE team determined that an ILS merger is feasible. The Team recommends:

- NWLS and WVLS pursue a joint ILS and move towards shared practices and policies.
- The refinement of a clear roadmap of the next steps and key decision points to be shared with all stakeholders.

Next Steps

1. LSTA funding sought to continue the work of the NICE Team.
2. The NICE Team will build off the Decision-making Principles and Future Considerations Roadmap.
3. The NICE Team's focus will be on reviewing findings and recommendations from ad hoc, expert workgroups and developing, with support and leadership from system staff and consultant(s), recommendations for collaboration.
4. A final suite of recommendations to the WVLS V-Cat Consortium, NWLN and WVLS, and NWLS Boards at the end.

The full NICE Report is available on the NICE website: https://nicelibraries.org/