

## **Forward Together Conversations Midwinter 2020 - Philadelphia**

### **Prompts for Discussion**

1. What changes have you seen within the organization (or your particular area of the organization) within the last year?
2. What have you learned, or do you hope to learn from those changes?
3. How do these changes or needs for change align with Forward Together?
4. What are two or three strategies to create effective, lasting, and positive change in ALA? What are some tools we can use with these strategies?

### **Key Takeaways from MW Overall**

- Many members are looking for the year round engagement and not just twice a year at conferences
- The financial information had a major impact at this Midwinter and members want more transparency
- Many pointed out that they would like to see notes and feedback made available somewhere (Connect, Microsite). They want to see that the feedback is(was) actually reflected in Forward Together.
- Strong concern over the 1 percent requirement to constitute a Round Table.
- Without council, some chapters fear they will not have a vote.
- Need more visuals to explain Forward Together, this would help people with different learning styles understand.

### **I. General Session - 1/25/2020 10:30-11:30am - Attendees: 45**

- A. Chapter communication has gotten better and many are happy, but it can continue to improve.
- B. There is a concern over chapters having just an advisory role and not having a vote.
- C. With assemblies, chapters have a voice and there is flexibility. But do chapters still get a vote?
- D. In terms of culture, there are ideological splits and moral concerns around the identity of ALA; Cultural shift is foundational and this is a difficult thing to do
- E. Financial concern has affected morale
- F. There is a frustration among councilors who feel they won't be as effective.
- G. The task force on sustainability is a positive change, one member noted.
- H. Member noted it is difficult to get resolutions done and voted on; there needs to be more meaningful work between conferences.
- I. Need to recenter on our core values
- J. There needs to be a clarification about what will happen after council goes away. Council's future has been communicated in a simplistic way; it needs to be clear where there is member engagement
- K. How will we continue to evaluate our structure? Is there a tasked group to make change and check in to make sure ALA is nimble?

- L. Strategies for changes
  - 1. Having clear guidelines for best practices for meeting and voting online.
  - 2. Find the things that people want done and get it done, to create trust. This will help get goodwill and positive feelings.
  - 3. Having a continuous review cycle
  - 4. Trust the membership, let them get involved in ALA Connect and committees. This includes nonmembers.
  - 5. Have more decisions put to a vote by the membership
  - 6. If people are willing to give their time, why not let them work for us.

II. **Divisions - 1/25/2020 12-1pm - Attendees: 100+**

- A. Divisions hope for more opportunities to speak as a group; the needs need to be heard.
- B. Feedback from AASL
  - 1. Youth divisions need more representation, not less
  - 2. There are fewer school librarians across the country; few of them are represented in ALA leadership (Council, EB, Committee Chairs)
  - 3. Needs support across ALA for school librarian advocacy such as joint ventures in programming, speakers, unified programming on common themes.
- C. PLA and ACRL Statement
  - 1. Vague language around divisions which is troublesome
  - 2. Report does not acknowledge that the divisions will be at the table.
  - 3. There are trust issues that need healing
- D. Does SCOE have a sense of urgency?
- E. Members need to know where we are financially - need transparency
- F. Forward Together Report needs to be more thoughtful and considerate of divisions.
- G. Overcommunication was encouraged
- H. Member noted every division, round table, chapter needs to be touched.
- I. There won't be a plan that everyone is going to like but it needs to be communicated well enough.
- J. Appeared that SCOE was unable to make decisions
- K. Feedback for next group
  - 1. A lot of people identify with their divisions; Give leverage to the fact that people love their divisions; same thing goes for round tables.
  - 2. SCOE and ALA Governance need to build trust and better communication
  - 3. We need to focus on the changes we need to be relevant to the membership and not just our divisions. We wouldn't be here if we didn't have membership.
  - 4. Budget transparency
  - 5. What does the external world need vs the divisions? What will help youth survive?
  - 6. Will the next group follow a management process and framework?
  - 7. Sense of urgency needs to be carried on.

- L. Member noted divisions can do work on their own and try out their own ideas
- III. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion 1/25/2020 - 4:30-5:30pm - Attendees: 22**
- A. ALA's structure makes it difficult for people to get involved
  - B. No one has time to go to 1000 meetings
  - C. The financials are a major impact this MW. The leadership has been extremely transparent, the numbers have hit home with members. The change of being brutally honest is a good change.
  - D. There are many personal costs associated with attending conferences. We basically pay to volunteer
  - E. There needs to be some type of committee chair/leadership training
  - F. Round Tables have begun to virtualize and streamline things.
  - G. Strategies for Change
    - 1. Look back at LLAMA's reorganization which turned out to be done well.
    - 2. There is a lot of staff time in setting up in person meetings. We need to look at what staff time will look like in the new model.
    - 3. Try to find a balance between in person and online; having spaces available to as many members as possible.
    - 4. Generally, ALA is expensive, there should be some type of deal or discount for joining multiple groups.
- IV. Round Tables - 1/26/2020 1-2pm - Attendees: 48**
- A. 7 Round Tables sent a letter to retain council
  - B. GODART - very few members, people are demoralized and don't see a way forward
  - C. How can we share bylaws?
  - D. RTs don't feel supported at conferences by ALA
  - E. Suggestion to increase the amount of overhead the RTs pay
  - F. Concern about meeting the membership requirement; How did SCOE get to this 1 percent? How is this going to be phased out?
  - G. RTs provide opportunity to learn in a smaller setting and to provide professional development
  - H. There is support for bylaws as long as we have procedures.
  - I. How is feedback actually being incorporated and addressed? Organizational chart or map that communicates this better would help.
  - J. Strategies for Change
    - 1. There is a lot of time spent in email and in person on how to do things (procedures and processes) There needs to be a set of simple bylaws
    - 2. RTs need support on how to encourage people to use Connect.
    - 3. Newer RTs need a way to learn how to meet virtually
    - 4. ALA needs to give IT support and Zoom training so RTs can engage meaningfully online
    - 5. How can we reduce overhead costs without reducing costs? Not use staff liaisons? Spend less time on election?
- V. Chapters - 1/26/2020 4-5pm - Attendees:**
- A. Many are comfortable online meetings via Zoom

- B. If we meet more than twice a year things will move a lot faster.
- C. Describe what engagement means? People are seeing the streamlining but use the examples of engagement to help see the future.
- D. Where is the room to have the conversation that would normally take place in council?
- E. Assemblies need more “teeth” in them; Budgets are tight and states may not send someone to conference if chapters lose their voice.
- F. Taking a policy making body (council) and putting them into silos and making them advisors isn’t going to help. No checks and balances in this current plan
- G. One member posed the questions who do at large councilors report to? Who do they actually serve if not divisions, RTs, or chapters?
- H. Concern we are switching one exclusivity group for another
- I. There needs to be a common message across all venues; Are we trying this or just parts of it? Is this just a skeleton?
- J. Strategies for change
  1. The language needs to be kind of both sides. Those who are newer members and those who have been members for a long time. Respect for both generations.
  2. The association needs a major rehaul and we want to move forward together.
  3. Clearly state some of the outcomes, expectations, and timelines. State the things we are looking for.
  4. Suggested that the Forward Together model be translated into different learning styles to help people understand

**VI. General Session 2 - 1/27/2020 - 10-11am - Attendees: 20**

- A. Who is establishing the next group? How will they be composed?
- B. Values and Work of Intellectual Freedom Committee are not recognized in the report instead they are relegated to other groups. IFC work is needed, they work year round tackling issues on a national scale. Why was this left off the standing committees of the board?
- C. How do we bring the message to those who are not in the room? How do we bring the association to them?
- D. People need to see how things are actually changing. They want to see notes and feedback.
- E. You want to increase member engagement but it looks like opportunities will be reduced?
- F. Council has the power, if council goes away who has the oversight? Who will play the tempering role?
- G. Where does COL fit in? Feedback has not been reflected.
- H. Define word the “engagement” everyone has something different. People want to be a part of the decision making. Exactly what is SCOE’s definition of engagement? There is got to be a clear understanding of what engagement means.

## **SCOE Member Highlights**

- RTs are the pathways for member engagement
- Some asked how to define “engagement.”
- Some asked if there are some short and quick Q & A on the web site, in the context that some people may not read the entire document of Forward Together.
- It may help some on the question of how to define 1 percent of the all ALA members, with inclusions and exclusions, etc.
- As Raymond included in the notes, the members who attended the Divisions session seem motivated to do some of this work (i.e., make changes to the current structure, collaborate more effectively) on their own, regardless of what happens with SCOE.
- This SCOE member left the Divisions session feeling optimistic about the possibility of collaboration.
- One SCOE member noticed that Council came up so little in the Divisions session.
- SCOE member noted that the timeline SCOE proposed feels slow for many. There was definitely a sense of urgency in the Divisions session, perhaps brought on by the ALA financial news that was on many folks’ minds.
- ALA members continue to want more information, transparency, and opportunities to be involved in SCOE’s work. There were a lot of questions about the membership and timeline for the implementation team and Phase 2 work.
- The 1% minimum requirement for RTs was a major sticking point and one that some discussion session members had a hard time moving past. I wonder what the conversation would have been like if we had not suggested a minimum requirement.
- Divisions really want SCOE or another group to create recommendations for them to be more effective. That should be in the next committee’s mantra.
- SCOE Member reiterated that we do need to create a clearer picture (with a visual) of what ALA will look like sans Council and how the association will be more fully inclusive after that’s happened.
- It was mentioned that if we need to find a more economic building, there should not be much discussion about it. “If I can’t afford to live in my house, I need to move.” - attendee from meeting