TASK FORCE ON RE-SHAPING ALCTS' FUTURE

Final Report

December 1, 2010

I. CHARGE

The Task Force on Re-Shaping ALCTS' Future was charged in August 2010 with examining the survey results from three ALCTS scenarios for reshaping the organization and with providing a detailed analysis of the comments. The Task Force was asked to examine the pros and cons of the responses to the scenarios and to look across the scenarios to find similarities and differences.

Members of the Task Force are John Duke (chair), Susan Davis, and Tim Strawn.

II. MATRIX OF RESPONSES

The Task Force was interested in comparing comments from the membership across scenarios. The comments were taken as expressions of values, indicating what the membership found worthwhile or important in belonging to ALCTS, independent of which particular scenario was favored. The Task Force created a matrix of responses, categorizing each response. Many responses embodied multiple values, so a single response may have multiple categories on the matrix. Since the majority of members favored the Blue scenario, it tends to dominant in the responses as well. In general, Blue respondents were more vocal in expressing values, amplifying their opinions somewhat out of proportion to their numbers. For example, in the first question 88% of the values expressed are Blue, even though the Blue scenario represented only 54% of the total respondents.

The results should be taken to indicate tendencies and not exact numbers. There is some subjectivity in applying the categories, and a liberal interpretation was often applied in an effort to look for commonalities.

Some of the most frequently expressed values were:

1. ALCTS should be more streamlined and flexible, less bureaucratic, and do a better job of communicating with the membership.
2. There is a strong desire for interest groups that can be quickly formed and are managed by a division level coordinator, and that groups should be routinely reviewed for relevance.

3. ALCTS should guard against overlapping units and should strive for efficiency. The organization should work more across sections and with other divisions on issues.

4. ALCTS should be bold and daring in adopting new organizational structures. The idea of communities resonated with many in the division as a different way to organize ourselves. It also elicited a smaller but vociferous reaction against it as a model.

5. ALCTS should take advantage of social networking opportunities, and in particular give members ways to participate that do not involve physically attending meetings.

6. Although bureaucracy is eschewed, that does not mean many members want a completely flat organization. Divisional committees and strong sections are seen by many as worthwhile.

7. Although most who expressed an opinion believe that the time has come for ALCTS to drop sections based upon formats, this is still a divisive topic, with passionate partisans arguing that Continuing Resources needs a home in the division.

8. When asked what are the areas that ALCTS should be covering that it is not now, there was a very strong response to the need for ALCTS to find a way to accommodate the issues of licensing, institutional repositories, and advocacy for technical services. However, all three of these issues were embedded in the questionnaire, so it is difficult to know if members were affirming what they believed, or simply responding to what they saw. It is possible that if other issues were highlighted in a similar fashion they could have evoked an equally strong response.

9. The strongest response following the top three areas that ALCTS should be addressing (licensing, IR, advocacy) was "nothing" -- ALCTS is on balance doing what it should be doing, indicating that ALCTS is not viewed as completely dysfunctional.

10. There is some support for ALCTS to do more in the areas of monitoring emerging technology trends, managing collections, helping new professionals, and managing metadata.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Incremental change. Although there is a strong undercurrent that ALCTS move immediately to some radical restructuring, it is advisable that the organization transition more cautiously. The Blue scenario was selected by slightly over half of

ALCTS -- but this also means that almost half of the organization found this scenario objectionable to some degree.

1.1. Implement obvious, simple changes first that do not alienate major constituencies.

1.2. Use discussion and education to increase the numbers in favor of change before implementation.

2. Communication. There is evidence that many calls for reform are based upon a lack of understanding of what is possible with the current ALCTS organization -- for example, the misunderstanding that members are only permitted to belong to a single section, or the belief that it is difficult to start an interest group.

2.1. Increase awareness of how ALCTS operates through such means as targeted mailings, social media, YouTube videos, and a regular column in the newsletter.

2.2. Use the continuing education Webinars as a recruitment and identity tool, following up the sessions with targeted mailings on the benefits of ALCTS, how other ALCTS resources can further the goals of the Webinar, etc.

2.3. Encourage the sections to aggressively promote continuing education opportunities for members beyond normal conference programming, including Webinars and a minimum of one e-forum per year.

2.4. Assign a director-at-large from the Board to chair a committee made up of representatives from each section (such as past chairs or directors-at-large) to develop publicity messages for ALA, for news organizations, and for social media outlets recognizing the accomplishments of ALCTS, issues in the news, legislation affecting the concerns of ALCTS, etc.

3. Structure. Many ALCTS members find their strongest sense of community in the sections; therefore changes must be made very carefully. On the one hand, there are many members who believe that sections organized around format are no longer appropriate. The contrary view is that there are still members who find value in this community. The bylaws have an established procedure for establishing a new section (based upon signed petition), but the process for dissolving a section is left to the section itself. For ALCTS to remain focused on current needs, a better process is required to keep sections consistently relevant. Some members look upon the sections as no longer relevant and are looking for a new organizational structure to replace them.

3.1. Revise the bylaws to periodically review the viability of the sections, with provision for dissolving a section, e.g., in the event that the number of

members drops for two consecutive years below the threshold required to establish a section.

3.2. For any section that is dissolved, devise a mechanism to help the remaining members continue as an interest group if they so desire.

3.3. Ask each section to examine the results of the survey, with an eye toward incorporating into its charge or programming major areas of interest of the membership in keeping with current trends in librarianship.

3.4. Encourage sections to examine what CMS and PARS are doing to simplify their structures and to use interest groups in place of some committees

3.5. Appoint a working group to develop how communities would function within ALCTS. Appoint one or more communities around some of the new themes that were proposed, such as institutional repositories, for a defined experimental period.

3.6. Examine duplication of effort and committees among the sections to determine what might be consolidated or simplified at the division level.

4. Interest groups. Members need help understanding how interest groups work, starting and sustaining them, and using them to make ALCTS a more flexible organization.

4.1. Appoint an interest group coordinator at the division level, with a clear set of defined duties and non-voting ex officio representation on the ALCTS Board.

4.2. Recruit those who have expressed support for new interest groups (such as licensing and institutional repositories) and help them kick-start. Promote early awareness through e-forums devoted to the topic.

5. Mentoring. Many of the same communication techniques for members in general can be targeted at newer members to welcome them into the organization and help them become effective members.

5.1. Aggressively recruit experienced members as role models.

5.2. Use personal contacts with new members and social media to engage new members.

5.3. Use ALA Connect to create a community for new members. Seed it with more experienced members to answer questions, suggest directions, and open doors.

5.4. Develop a free Webinar on becoming a successful ALCTS member, and archive it for future use.

5.5. Host an e-forum on participating in ALCTS.

5.6. Experiment at Annual and Midwinter with informal lunches, breakfasts, coffee, and cocktails with the newly elected section vice-chairs, appointed/incoming division committee chairs, and interest group chairs. Meet at interesting venues away from the convention centers.

5.7. Have each section develop mentoring opportunities for those new to the profession or new to ALCTS.

6. Virtualization. Many potential members in schools and public libraries have a difficult time attending conferences, and travel costs are increasing for everyone.

6.1. Continue to build out and encourage ALA Connect. Make some committee processes mandatory on Connect, such as posting summary of activities and minutes.

6.2. Expand virtual committee members.

6.3. Experiment with some meetings in virtual worlds, as well as combined physical and virtual world meetings.

6.4. Increase archive of recorded Webinars and conferences, priced aggressively.

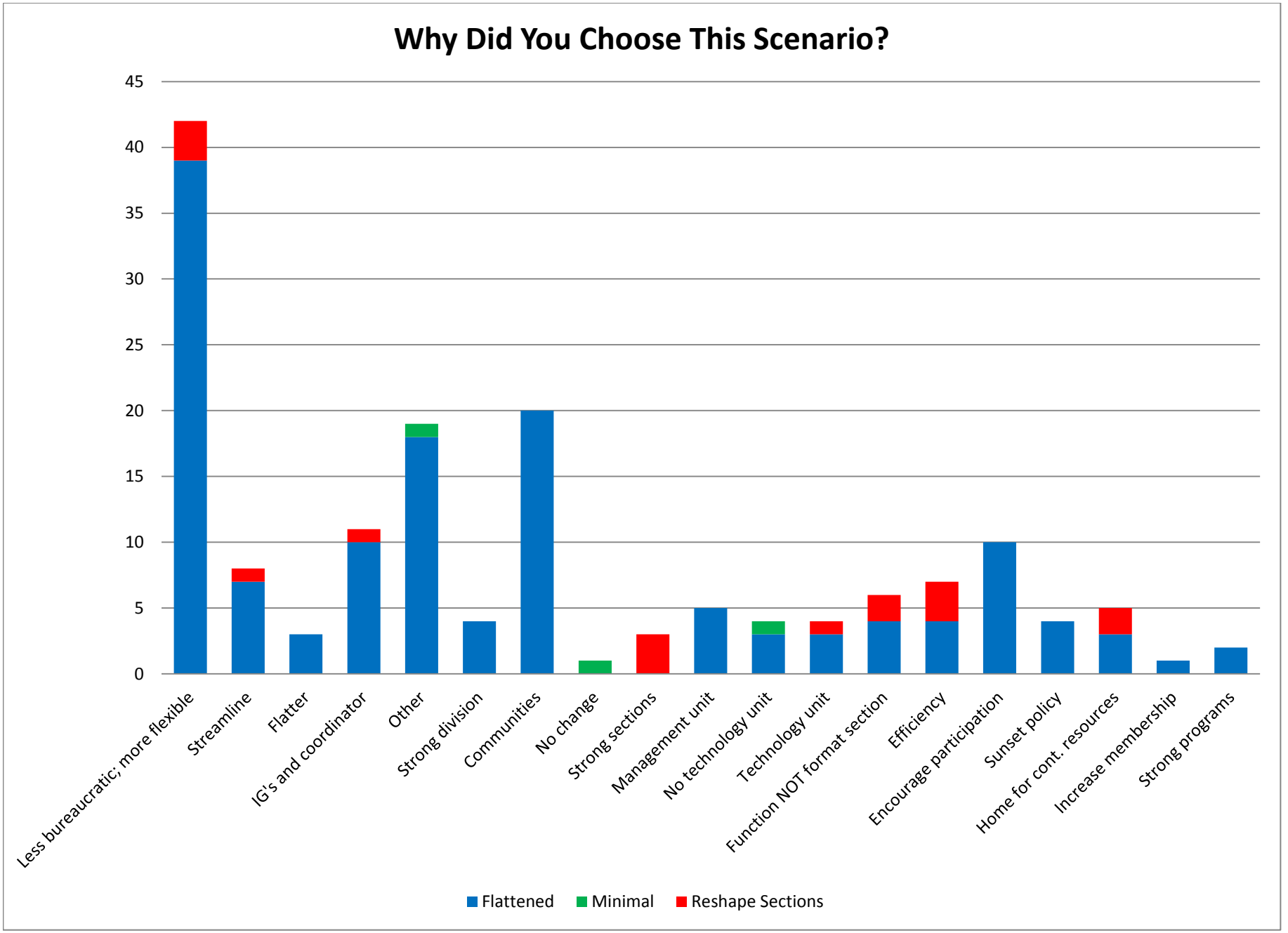
7. Process. ALCTS is a large, complex organization with many strands. Focusing the organization on organizational process issues is difficult but vital if there is going to be substantive change.

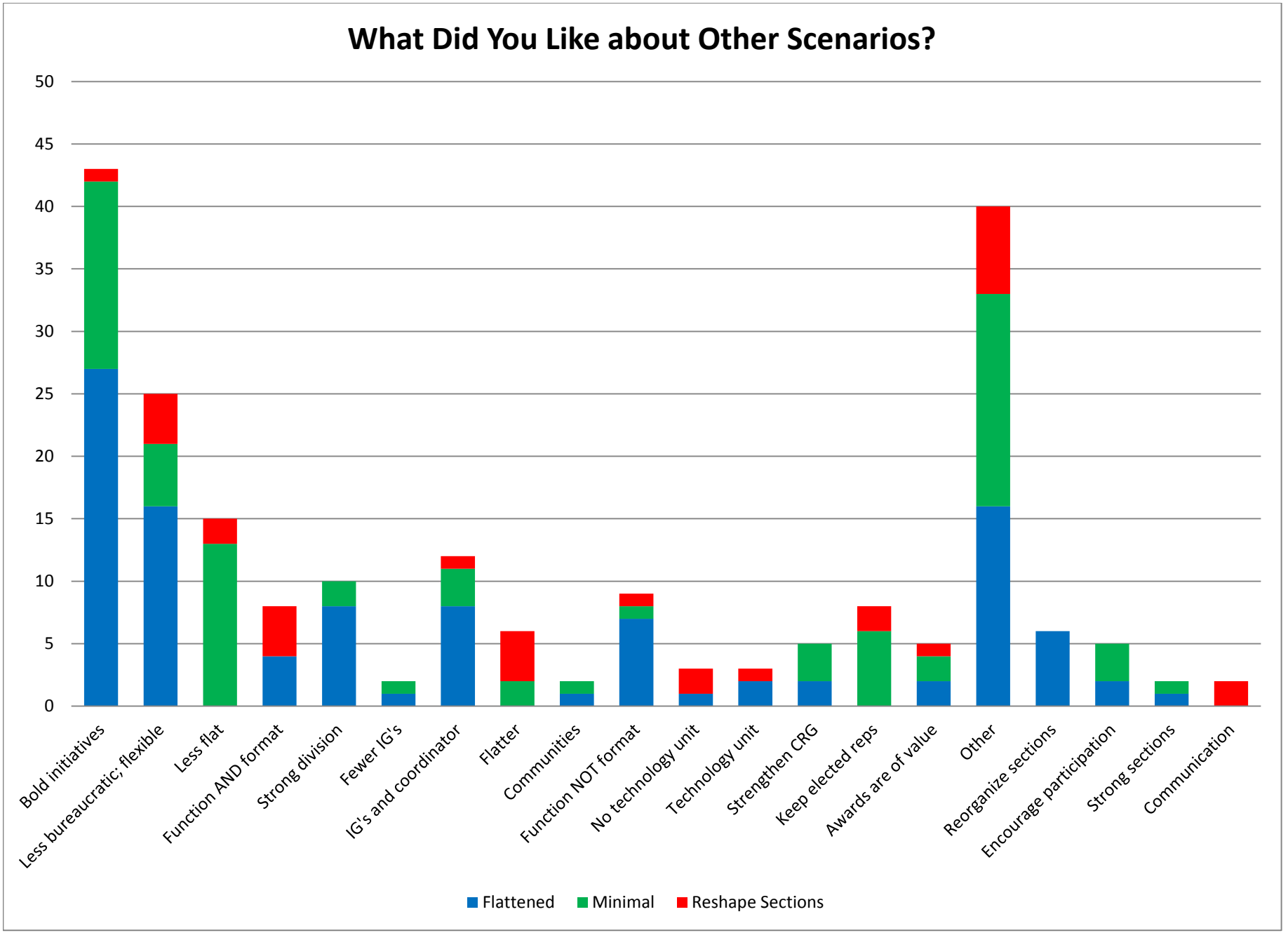
7.1. Create an accessible and brief summary of the survey results. Include a way to identify concerns that have been raised but that ALCTS is already addressing.

7.2. Host an e-forum on the future of the organization

7.3. Charge each section and divisional committee to review the results of the survey and suggest ways it can improve its performance in response and where it is already fulfilling any of the suggested changes.

7.4. Post and publicize the ALCTS organizational chart to ALA Connect, with hot links to names and e-mail addresses to encourage communication.


Why Did You Choose This Scenario?
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Less bureaucratic; more flexible
Streamline
Flatter
IG's and coordinator
Other
Strong division
Communities
No change
Strong sections
Management unit
No technology unit
Technology unit
Function NOT format section
Efficiency
Encourage participation
Sunset policy
Home for cont. resources
Increase membership
Strong programs
Flattened
Minimal
Reshape Sections


What Did You Like about Other Scenarios?
50
45
40
35
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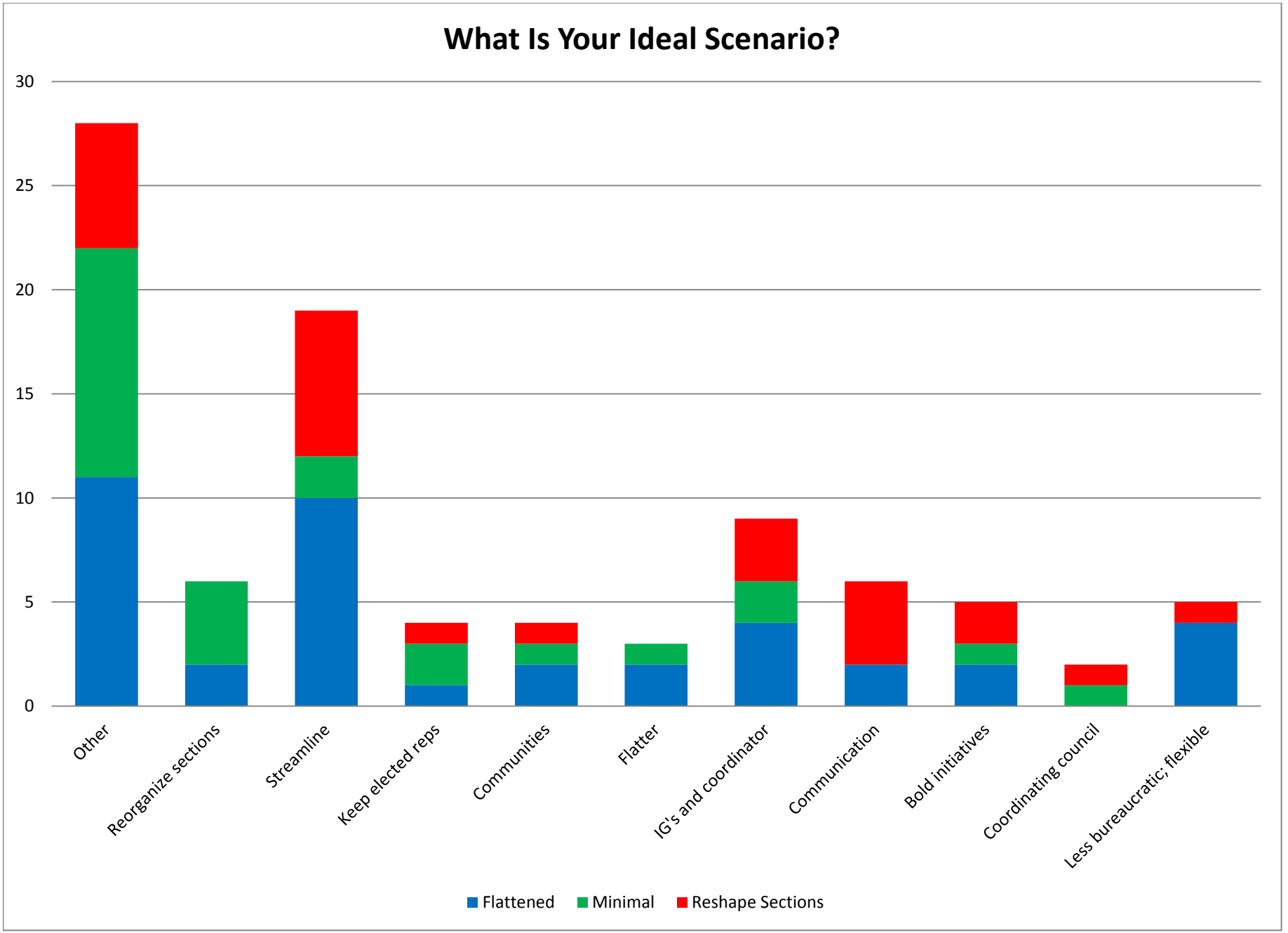
25
20
15
10
5
0
Bold initiatives
Less bureaucratic; flexible
Less flat
Function AND format
Strong division
Fewer IG's
IG's and coordinator
Flatter
Communities
Function NOT format
No technology unit
Technology unit
Strengthen CRG
Keep elected reps
Awards are of value
Other
Reorganize sections
Encourage participation
Strong sections
Communication
Flattened
Minimal
Reshape Sections


What Is Your Ideal Scenario?
30
25
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15
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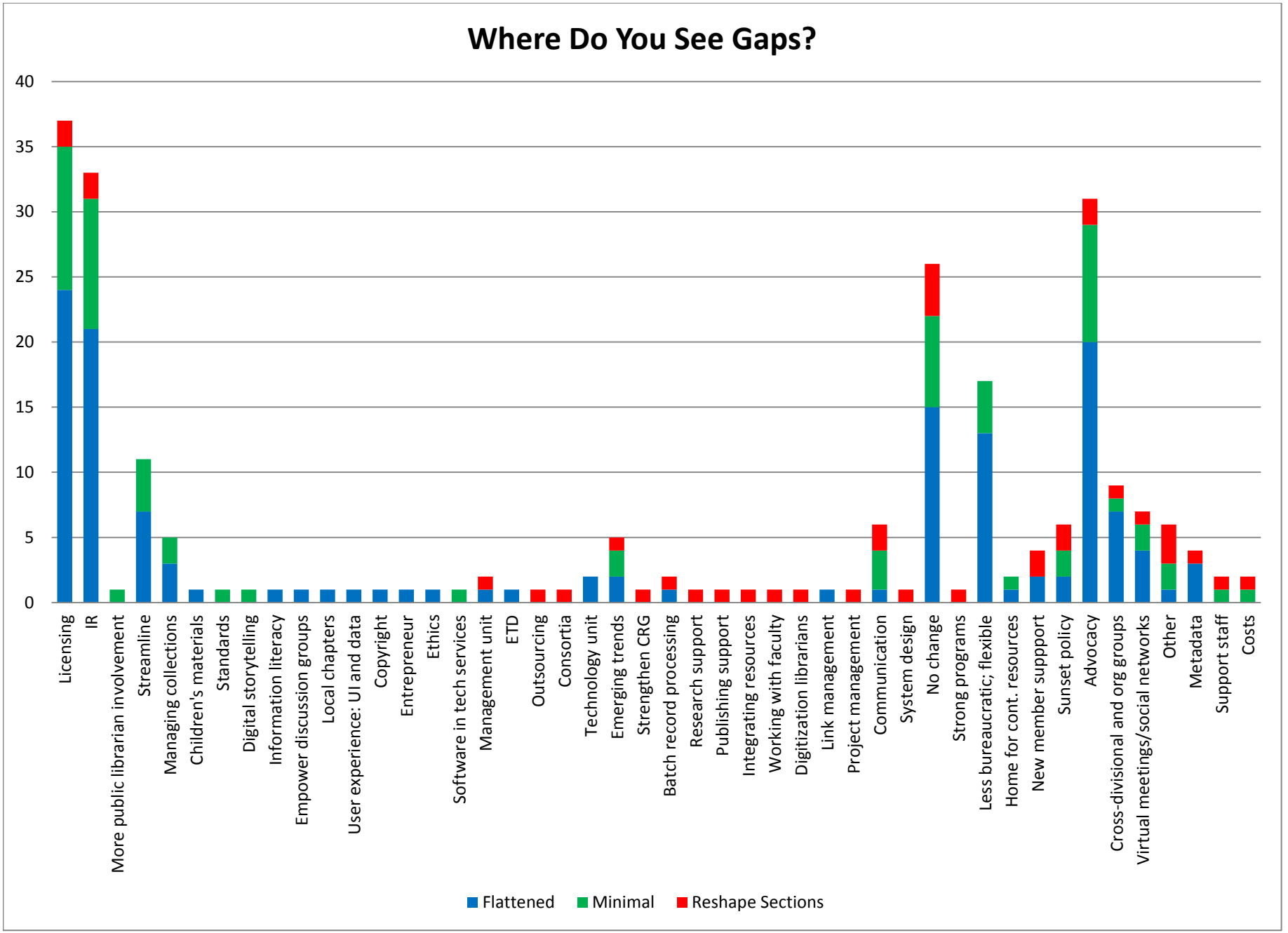
5
0
Other
Reorganize sections
Streamline
Keep elected reps
Communities
Flatter
IG's and coordinator
Communication
Bold initiatives
Coordinating council
Less bureaucratic; flexible
Flattened
Minimal
Reshape Sections


Where Do You See Gaps?
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10
5
0
Licensing
IR
More public librarian involvement
Streamline
Managing collections
Children's materials
Standards
Digital storytelling
Information literacy
Empower discussion groups
Local chapters
User experience: UI and data
Copyright
Entrepreneur
Ethics
Software in tech services
Management unit
ETD
Outsourcing
Consortia
Technology unit
Emerging trends
Strengthen CRG
Batch record processing
Research support
Publishing support
Integrating resources
Working with faculty
Digitization librarians
Link management
Project management
Communication
System design
No change
Strong programs
Less bureaucratic; flexible
Home for cont. resources
New member suppport
Sunset policy
Advocacy
Cross-divisional and org groups
Virtual meetings/social networks
Other
Metadata
Support staff
Costs
Flattened
Minimal
Reshape Sections