

Oregon Community Foundation – call for RFP, new study Permission to share Vision 2020 final report

Proposal

Susan Elliot, a qualitative research consultant, is pursuing the opportunity to conduct a study for the Oregon Community Foundation regarding libraries. She would like approval by the OLA Board before sharing the Vision 2020 final report with her client. She is also requesting assistance from OLA with regard to participant selection for the new study.

Background

Vision 2020 Final Report – permission to share with client

Susan Eliot is a consultant who managed the qualitative study that OLA did to support the creation of Vision 2020 in 2008-2009. She is now responding to the RFP put out by the Oregon Community Foundation to conduct a needs assessment of Oregon libraries.

While the final product was posted – Vision 2020 – the final report was not. Susan is asking for permission to share this report with a potential client. The information in the Vision 2020 report was entirely anonymous and shared widely with the OLA membership during the info-gathering portion of the Vision 2020 project.

The OLA Board will need to discuss this matter and vote for approval.

New study on libraries

Also, Susan is going to propose to the Oregon Community Foundation conducting another Delphi, similar to the Vision 2020 study and would hope OLA would agree to work with her to recruit participants.

The goal of the new study as stated in the Oregon Community Foundation RFP is the following, in Susan's words:

The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) seeks bids for a needs and opportunities assessment of Oregon's public libraries. A consortium of funders is interested in learning how best to support Oregon's library system as they address the future challenges of serving a diverse public. The purpose of this needs assessment project is to answer the following questions:

1. *What are the roles that Oregon's libraries currently play in their communities (e.g., education and literacy, civic and community engagement, economic and workforce development)?*
2. *What role do libraries play specifically in the early childhood system (e.g., early childhood education, early childhood health and well-being, parenting education) in Oregon?*
3. *What promising practices, programs, and strategies are Oregon's libraries using to fulfill these roles?*
 - a. *How do Oregon libraries measure the success and impact of their programs?*
 - b. *How can the spread of these promising programs be encouraged?*
 - c. *What are the challenges faced by Oregon's libraries to fulfilling these roles?*

4. *What can we learn from libraries nationally? Specifically:*

- a. *Are there any promising practices, programs, and strategies from outside of Oregon as related to the roles of libraries outlined above?*
- b. *Could these approaches work for Oregon libraries?*
- c. *Are there other roles that libraries are playing in order to contribute to resilient communities of the future?*

I would use a participant selection method similar to the one I used for the Vision 2020 Delphi method. Here I have copied a description of that methodology from the report I wrote:

Participants

Selection

Because the Delphi is designed to elicit the input of experts and/or those with skill and experience in the content area, potential participants must be nominated for participation. Out of over 1000 librarians in the state, the Vision 2020 subcommittee sought to select a diverse and geographically dispersed group of approximately 100 individuals. They wanted to include representation from public (multi-branch and stand-alone), academic (2yr and 4yr), school (K- 12), and special libraries throughout the state. Types of personnel they sought to involve included administrative staff, support staff, technical staff, paraprofessional staff, public service staff, catalogers, reference specialists, youth services staff and graduate students. Also, to be nominated, they felt individuals should possess the following traits:

Forward thinking, visionary

Acutely aware of, and focused on, user needs! Creative, innovative, open-minded

Able to transcend local issues

Dedicated to making a positive impact on library services

Able and willing to dedicate approximately six hours of time (total) over a period of two months to participate in the Delphi

Able to clearly and succinctly express themselves in writing

Will speak for more than themselves and their local issues in their Delphi responses

The Vision 2020 subcommittee asked the other nine members of the Vision 2020 Task Force to recommend 10 to 15 individuals each who might meet the above criteria. From the pool of recommended individuals, the subcommittee then selected a group of diverse and geographically dispersed individuals to participate in the Delphi. Where geographic areas or personnel types lacked representation, they asked the task force for more names. In all, 79 individuals were invited to participate and 74 of them accepted the invitation. (Both the letter to the Vision 2020 Task Force and the letter of invitation are included in the Appendix.)

Participant Profile

Delphi participants represented 19 different counties in Oregon with Washington (15%), Multnomah (14%), Lane (13%), Marion (12%), and Deschutes (10%) counties having the highest percentages. Sixty percent of participants identified themselves as working at public libraries and 23 percent at academic libraries. Nearly a third (32%) said they held administrative positions, 17 percent work as reference librarians, and nine percent are systems specialists. With regard to longevity: nearly a third (29%) have more than 20 years of library experience; another near-third (29%), between 11 and 20 years of library experience; 21 percent, 6 to 10 years experience; and the remaining 21 percent, five years or less. (A complete summary of the participant profile can be found in the Appendix.)