Technology Planning for USF E-rate

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New Directors Workshop 2008

You've got to be very careful if you don't know
where you're going, because you might not get there.

Yogi Berra

What Is E-rate?

- ◆ E-rate is the law established by the U.S. Congress in 1996 that provides for reduced telecommunications rates for schools and libraries.

What Can My Library Get Out of E-rate?

◆ Reduced up-front costs or reimbursements for telecomm. including Internet and phone service.

What Would My Discount Be?

◆ Your discount is based primarily on the percentage of children in your service area who are eligible for the National School Lunch Program, an indicator of financial need in your community. To determine your discount rate, visit www.michigan.gov/ldds and click on "Universal Service Fund USF E-rate" in yellow on the left.

Interested?

- If you are interested in applying for E-rate, please see your co-op director for more information.

- The rest of this presentation addresses one important element of the E-rate process, the technology plan that is required to be approved by the state library for all eligible E-rate discounts except telephone service.

Why Plan?

- So that technology decisions align with the overall library plan
- To think about how you are integrating technology into the libraries' operations
- To manage and coordinate the multitude of technology applications throughout the library
- To provide effective services to your patrons

The Why's Continued

- So that everyone has a common understanding of the role of technology in the library and

- To justify budget requests externally and plan for budget expenditures internally

But Most Importantly

Technology planning will help you!

Creating a technology plan provides a time and place for you to think about your technology goals to help avoid IT crisis saving you time, expense and trouble.

Technology planning is profitable for all libraries, regardless of whether they apply for E-rate.

Who Should Be on the Team?

- ◆ Evaluate interest and expertise on staff
  - Public Services
  - Technical Services
  - Technology Staff
- ◆ Include a board member
- ◆ Consider including community members who are technologically fluent or who run businesses that rely on IT – they deal with technology planning, too.

What Should I Know Going in to Technology Planning for E-rate?

◆ Each part of your plan must align with all of the others – your mission statement must be reflected in your goals which must be reflected in your budget. Technology plans are not considered independently from other areas of library operations.

How E-rate Differs from Traditional Technology Planning

- E-rate is closely aligned with industry-standard technology planning.

- E-rate has specific, required criteria. These are listed out on the application and we'll review each one today.

Gathering Momentum

A good technology plan follows closely on the heels of your organization's vision statement.

The goals of your technology plan should support the goals of your vision statement.

Your Vision

A **vision** is the desired future state for the organization.

- Realistic
- Credible
- Attractive
- Future-Oriented

Vision cont.

- ◆ inspires enthusiasm & encourages commitment
- ◆ well articulated & easily understood
- ◆ reflects the uniqueness of the organization
- ◆ ambitious

  ▪ Gail Powers-Schaub

Strong Example:
Alcona County Library

The mission of Alcona County Library is to strive to be the center of the community's intellectual, educational, and cultural life, providing opportunities for independent studies, life long learning and cultural enrichment, as well as information needed by citizens in their daily lives.
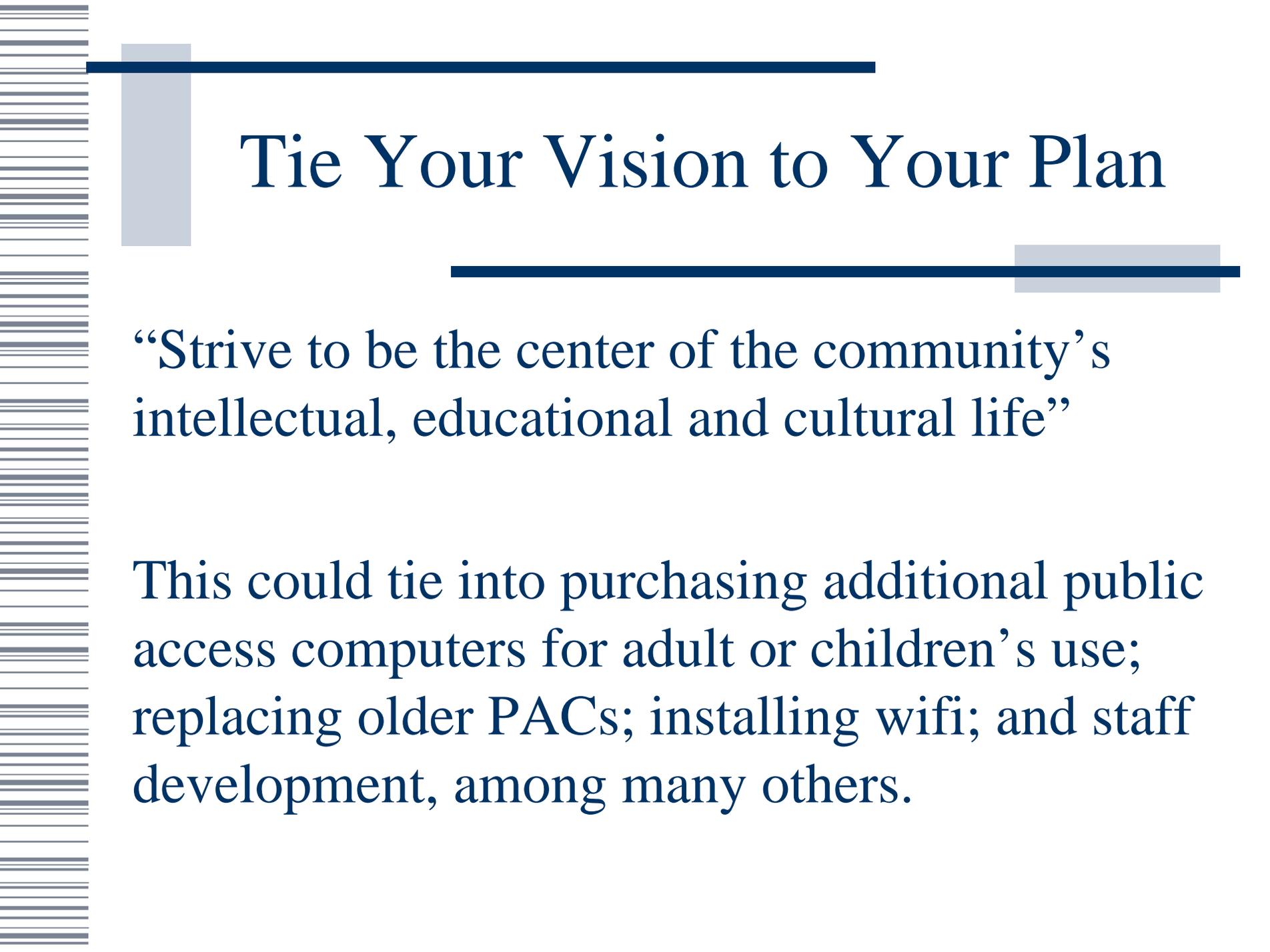
Tie Your Vision to Your Plan

"Strive to be the center of the community's intellectual, educational and cultural life"

This could tie into purchasing additional public access computers for adult or children's use; replacing older PACs; installing wifi; and staff development, among many others.

Michael Stephens

Technology is not an end in itself but a tool to help us meet our libraries' service goals

SWOT Analysis and How It Relates to Library Service and Tech Goals

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Service and Tech Goals

STRENGTHS

Service and Tech Goals

WEAKNESSES

Service and Tech Goals

OPPORTUNITIES

Service and Tech Goals

THREATS

A Successful Technology Plan Is

- Concrete
- Realistic
- Attainable
- Internally consistent and
- Accurately represents the
  - Intentions
  - Skills and
  - Resources at your library and in your community

Success cont.

- ◆ Is aligned with the vision statement and goals of your library as a whole

- ◆ Has the buy-in of staff and the board

- ◆ Specifically addresses each of the five required E-rate elements

But We're Not Rich…

◆ Technology planning should be appropriate to the organization for which it is a supporting document and a realistic appraisal of what your library can do within the confines of your expected budget.

- It's OK if you can't afford wifi, even if you wish you could.
- It's OK if you can only replace one Public Access Computer per year, even if you wish you could replace three.

A Three Year Plan

◆ Technology plans may span up to 3 years but no longer.

◆ E-rate years begin July 1 and end June 30

A plan applied for today would span July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2011

When to Write Your Plan

- A technology plan for the E-rate program must be created before you file your Form 470 in the fall and you must retain records that demonstrate this.

- It must be approved by the time services begin on July 1.

E-rate requires five elements that are weighted equally in terms of plan approval

1. Goals and a realistic strategy for using telecommunications and information technology to improve library services

2. A professional development strategy to ensure that staff knows how to use the new technologies to improve education or library services.

3. An assessment of telecommunication services, hardware, software, and other services needed

E-rate cont.

4. The plan must provide for a sufficient budget to acquire and maintain the hardware, software, professional development, and other services that will be needed to implement the strategy for improved education or library services.

5. The plan must include an evaluation process that enables the school or library to monitor progress toward the specified goals and make mid-course corrections in response to new developments and opportunities as they arise.

USF Element 1: Goals and Strategy

- ◆ Goals and a realistic strategy for using telecommunications and information technology to improve library services

Goals are Made Up of SMART Objectives

- **S**pecific. Objectives should generate specific actions and be detailed enough to be understandable and give clear directions to others.

- **M**easurable. A method for measuring an objective must be in place before work can begin. As such, a measure will determine when the objective has been accomplished.

SMART Objectives cont.

◆ **A**ggressive but **A**ttainable. Objectives should be consistent with available resources but still cause library staff members to stretch to meet them.

◆ **R**esults-oriented. Rather than being general or vague, objectives should specify a result – an output or an outcome.

SMART Objectives cont.

◆ **T**ime-bound. A specific deadline should be stated for achieving the objective. Generally the shorter the time frame for action, the better.

Goals and Service Needs

Be clear about the relationship of your **goals and objectives** to your **service goals.**

Strong Example:
St. Clair County Library

- Goals and strategies broken down into sections:
    - Collections
    - Outreach
    - Services
    - Training (staff)
    - Training (public)
    - Web site
- Each section has specific goals; each goal has specific activities and items to support it

St. Clair County Library Goals

- Services – Goal 3: Investigate wireless Internet access for public use. Activities:
  - Evaluate the inventory project using wireless technology
  - Have IT evaluate each building for "dead zones"
  - Design wireless area for each of the branches
  - Evaluate space for patrons
  - Investigate security issues
  - Write policy and procedure

What to Avoid

- Goals you have already met such as equipment that was purchased before the time span of the technology plan

- Strategies or technology goals that are not aligned with your library's mission statement (for instance, your mission statement is clear that children's and adult services are equally important to the library but no provisions or explanations are made for not updating technology in the children's area)

What to Avoid cont.

- Goals that do not specifically relate technology goals to library services.

It's OK to Include…

- ◆ Services that are on-going such as "continuing to provide public access to the Internet"
- ◆ Goals for staff such as "train staff with new forms of technology" (in fact, staff training is a required part of an E-rate tech plan!)

Please Keep in Mind

◆ You cannot receive discounts on services not included in your technology plan. If you will apply for a discount on your Internet costs, you must include providing Internet service as a goal.
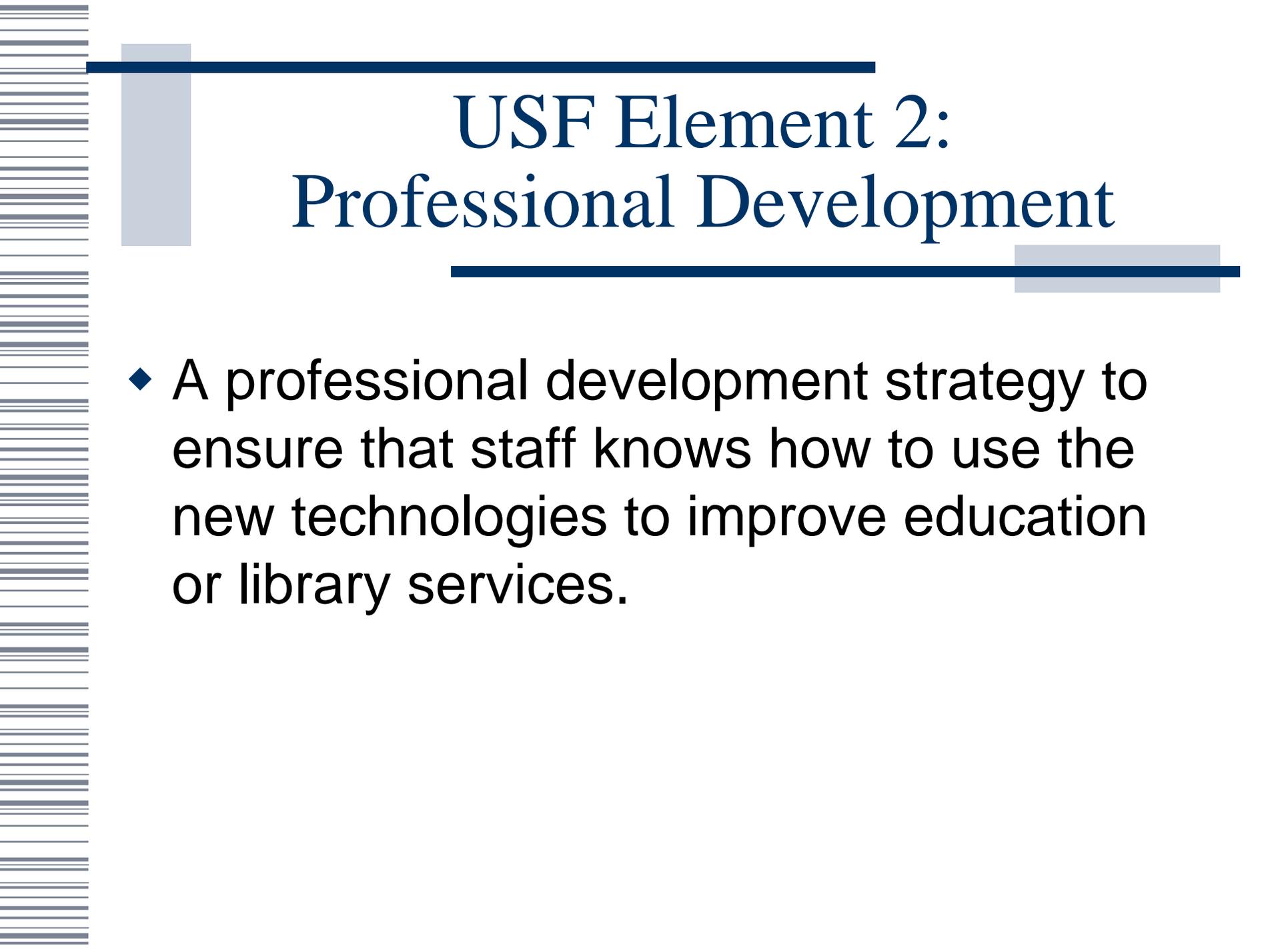
USF Element 2: Professional Development

◆ A professional development strategy to ensure that staff knows how to use the new technologies to improve education or library services.

Strong Example from the Kent District Library

- ◆ Goal: Fulfill public service objectives through effective staff training and development
  - ■ Objective: Develop a plan for staff technology training to enhance the use of technology by staff in their daily work roles
  - ■ Objective: Provide staff professional resources in electronic formats whenever feasible
  - ■ Objective: Raise the staff's level of comfort with technology by developing tutorials for online functions using presentation software
  - ■ Objective: Improve internal and external customer support

It's OK to Include…

◆ Training that you do on-site such as training provided during staff in-service days

◆ Training provided by your ILS

◆ Online classes

◆ Classes that staff take at other libraries

◆ Classes provided by the co-op

◆ Conference attendance where material is appropriate, such as MLA or the Rural Libraries Conference

◆ Classes or seminars that staff can receive CEUs for, such as MeL training

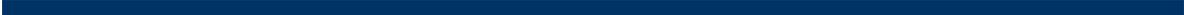◆ The library's training procedures for new staff

What to Avoid

- ◆ Staff development goals that are unrelated to technology and/or can't be tied to improving library service

USF Element 3: Needs Assessment

- ◆ An assessment of telecommunication services, hardware, software, and other services needed

First: What Do You Have?

- Conduct a technology inventory of hardware and software

- Free tools available from TechAtlas (for working online) and TechSoup (for Word documents you can print and fill in)

Example from Crawford County Library

| Accessible	OS	Internet	Total Units
Patron Access Workstation	Windows XP	Yes	24
Patron Access Catalog	Windows XP	Yes	26
Patron Access Laptop	Windows XP	Yes	11
Staff Access Workstation	Windows XP	Yes	10
Children's Workstation	Windows XP	No	5

Second: What Do You Need?

- ◆ Evaluate hardware, software and other technology services you will need to improve library services

Example from Crawford County Library
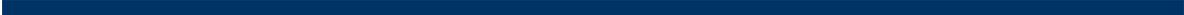
◆ Technology needed broken down in to:

- Software

- Hardware

- Telecommunications

- Replacement Plan

Hardware examples from Crawford County Library

- Upgrade scanners to accommodate a variety of forms

- Purchase barcode readers to replace obsolete units as well as mobile unit for inventory

- Purchase hardware equipment to digitize historical documents and to make them available for public use

- Purchase wireless hubs to make client computers more easily accessed at all branches as technology and accessibility permit.

What to Avoid

- Including purchase of items not included in your budget
- Including items that are not included in your goals and objectives
- Including items that do not tie into providing patron service

Goals – Needs Assessment – Budget should line up

USF Element 4: Budget

◆ The plan must provide for a sufficient budget to acquire and maintain the hardware, software, professional development, and other services that will be needed to implement the strategy for improved education or library services.

Guidelines to Keep in Mind

- Build in 10% of your budget for contingencies
- Best-practices establishes a 3-5 year replacement plan for staff computers and for public access computers.

Budget Line Items for Next 3 Years

- Hardware

- Software

- Telecommunications

- Contract Services for IT staff

- Staff Training

- Other (Please describe)

What to Avoid

- Establishing the goal of purchasing services or equipment (such as hardware or software) without a line item in your budget to pay for it.

- Establishing the goal of providing a technology service (such as wireless or a T3 line) without a line item in your budget to pay for it.

- Not providing a budget for professional development unless free options alone have been established in the plan. If this is the case, include a line item with figures of $0.

USF Element 5: Evaluation Process

- The plan must include an evaluation process that enables the school or library to monitor progress toward the specified goals and make mid-course corrections in response to new developments and opportunities as they arise.

Target Goals and **Timeline for Accomplishing Your Goals**

- ◆ Benchmarks toward your goals must be measurable
  - By this date something will have happened
    - **Example**: Replace all public access computers more than four years old by December 31, 2008 (Goal 1A).
    - **Example**: Redesign Web site so that it meets accessibility standards by August 31, 2008 (Goal 6B).
- ◆ Regular Review
  - Reviewing your plan on a regular basis will help you **measure the success** of your technology plan and help you **make course corrections**.

Make Corrections and Incorporate Feedback

- ## Make course corrections
  - As the months and years go by, technology will improve, prices will go down, and opportunities will arise. By reviewing your plan on a scheduled basis, and making it flexible, you will be able to take advantage of the opportunities as they arise.

- ## Incorporate Feedback
  - If the technology you're providing is for your staff, the staff should evaluate the technology or service.
  - If the technology you're providing is for your patrons, you need to incorporate a way for them to evaluate the technology.
    - For example: surveys, questionnaires on-line or in print, verbally

What to Avoid

◆ Leaving out a full response to this area.

■ You must have an evaluation process in place and acknowledge that you are prepared to make mid-course corrections as appropriate.

It's OK…

- If you don't cover every contingency.
- You know your library, use this opportunity to think about
  1. Measuring your goals to see if you've been successful in meeting them
  2. The most common challenges that could arise and the methods already in place of problem-solving at your library.
  3. How will you gather feedback and incorporate it?

Also, let us know…

◆ Inform the Library of Michigan in writing of any substantive changes over the course of the 3-year technology plan. Keep a copy of this letter with your E-rate documentation.

What To Do Once Your Technology Plan is Done

◆ Send your technology plan to be approved by the Library of Michigan.

◆ We use the 5 guidelines talked about here as a checklist to approve your plan or return it for further work.

◆ Once approved, we send you an approval letter which you should keep on file for at least 5 years after the last date of service – approximately 8-9 years after the plan is written.

After It's Approved

◆ Technology plans are audited by E-rate as a matter of routine to meet federal guidelines to reduce waste, fraud and abuse. Write your plan with this possibility in mind.

Your Technology Plan is a Vision Statement: A vision of how you want technology to support your library's goals. Take advantage of the opportunities technology planning provides