Plan of Service Focus Group Session
Youth Service Providers @MHLS | April 20, 2011

Challenges & Issues:

- **Funding**
    - Funding shortfalls are a large concern. Specifically funds for staff and programs.
        - General feeling that there is "not enough time to get the job done." As a result staff reported feeling like they are behind in knowing about trends, research, program ideas, "what's hot" for kids and teens. Also reporting a lack of time to plan for programs and do outreach.
        - Observation that it is not just youth service people feeling this way, they see their coworkers in the same situation, being asked to do more and more in less time
        - Staff reported taking work home and working unpaid to get the job done, even if they are hourly employees which most are.
    - Unsure of how to respond to financial cutbacks so that the public "feels it"
    - Less than half of staff reported helping educate parents about the library's funding situation or being asked to do so
- **Training**
    - Seeking face-to-face networking/training with others who do what they do to share best practices; majority agreed that they are visual and experiential learners
    - Interested in online courses, particular for non-library specific training (example: dealing with autistic children)
    - Would like opportunities to see how other libraries do programming
    - Want to make sure they are keeping up with the latest technology
    - How to help parents that are under stress
- **Programming**
    - Seeking less expensive, less time intensive program ideas
    - Some libraries are struggling to get teens to attend library programs.
    - Desire to ensure they are offering relevant programs to the community.
    - "Budget for Summer Reading Program gets tighter every year."
    - Many libraries reported a lack of space to accommodate the demand for programs
    - Participation is a challenge for ages 10 and up.
    - How can libraries adjust their focus of program design with existing staffing structure as targets groups/demographics/expectations change
    - Some libraries are having success by focusing program planning as interest based rather than age based
    - Looking for ways to evaluate what worked, what brings the most people in
- **Publicity**
    - Concerned about attracting more people than can be served.
    - Looking for ways to energize local teachers about what the library has to offer.
    - See a direct correlation between outreach to the schools and increases in usage

- o Group agreed that word-of-mouth is the best PR tool, looking for ways to get better at that.
- **Collection Development**
  - o Looking for help in balancing "what they want" with "what we know they need"
  - o Seeking assistance in researching materials to purchase
- **Services**
  - o A significant increase in demand for services for families with special needs children has been observed. YS providers are very interested in learning more about how to support these families.
  - o Some libraries are noticing an increase in the number of immigrant families using the library; there are concerns staff will not be able to meet their needs/communicate with them.

Defining "Success":
- They are comfortable in the library
- They are happy to ask for location or help
- They enjoy being at the library
- YS as gateway to the library
- An increase in grandparents (primary caregiver) and dads (out of work or different schedule)

System Support
- Previously relied on the System to help them keep current with YS topics, trends, research, programs that work, "what's hot".
- Rely on the listserv and face-to-face networking/training opportunities
- Found the performers showcase to be useful

What do you hope people are saying about the library?
- They are reflecting what the community wants
- It's fun
- The library has what I want
- It's exciting
- I am part of the library
- It changes people's lives
- Engaged, excited, delighted
- Open, friendly and welcoming
- Kid friendly
- A relaxing place
- Feel comfortable
- Pride
- "Like going to Disneyland"
- I always leave happy with something I needed or didn't know I wanted.