

NDSR PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is one of the most daunting challenges that the NDSR initiative currently faces. Funding and strategic planning are necessary to carry the program into the future and continue to meet the goals of this national initiative.

COORDINATED SERVICES

As previously discussed, there is a need for a coordinating body that can accept responsibility for cross-program operations, strategic planning, and the identification of funding sources. This representative group can work to revise the profile of NDSR, promote the program to other funders, and leverage resources such as professional expertise or infrastructure across programs.

NDSR may move toward sustainability by identifying, sharing, and leveraging common or centralized services to maximize efficiency across individual programs, to encourage sponsorship and supplementary funding from any source, to enable NDSR programs to expand more quickly through greater capacity and scalability, and to support NDSR as a durable network. As noted, an NDSR steering or advisory committee may initially provide many of these services. Such a committee may later develop into a more formalized central provider for the NDSR initiative: ideally, a small-scale, nonprofit initiative with low overhead to help coordinate activities, offer training, and support NDSR programs.

Such a provider could help develop and promote common services to connect NDSR with other funders. These might include

- Providing services such as training, marketing, and evaluation for NDSR programs
- Providing resources to encourage common care for residents in terms of health care, comparable salaries, and various benefits
- Coordinating outreach and communication for programs
 - o Communication tools: providing centralized tools and support to reduce marketing and communication expenses, assist programs with communication strategies and branding, and encourage sustainability
 - o Alumni: providing a means for a growing alumni network of residents, host institutions, mentors, and friends of NDSR members to share updates, encourage new programs, highlight lessons learned, and contribute to shared resources

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- Identifying additional funders and sponsors
- Leveraging local and regional networks (e.g., affiliated professional associations)

FUNDING

To date, NDSR programs have been funded partly through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program and partly through the administering organizations. It is not feasible for IMLS or any other funder to sponsor every NDSR program in building toward the vision of a national network of programs, and it is not easy for any program to become sustainable without significant amounts of additional funding from one source or another.

Any sustainability strategy should involve multiple sources of funding; that is, to keep from becoming vulnerable to the same kinds of risk, programs must have a balanced funding portfolio. They can address this need by

- Engaging past, current, and future host institutions in strategizing to emphasize the opportunities afforded by hosting and to address the challenges of sustaining programs
- Developing clear and compelling explanations of costs, needs, and sponsoring options to encourage host institutions to cover or offset the costs of extending the reach and sustainability of programs
- Exploring local, regional, national, domain-specific networks and other potential sources for corporate, foundation, and other sponsorship
- Documenting and sharing current and possible financial models for programs to encourage new or hybrid approaches to funding and sponsorship
- Examining the possibilities of connecting topical residencies to other funder priorities
- Encouraging corporate engagement, including identifying ways in which NDSR can help corporate sponsors in building their own digital curation and preservation capacity

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STRATEGIC PLANNING

Engaging in strategic and future-focused thinking will help the NDSR community identify potential partners, funding opportunities, champions, and contributors. Discussions of continued strategic development and long-term sustainability of the NDSR Initiative should take into consideration the following topics:

- Identifying new funding opportunities
- Formalizing the ongoing role of an NDSR steering or advisory board
- Developing an assessment model to continuously integrate new areas and lessons learned
- Devising measures to demonstrate the impact of the program
- Addressing diversity concerns in parallel with resident compensation and continuing to increase NDSR's inclusivity and support for young professionals
- Seeking additional ways to encourage creativity and innovation in residencies
- Establishing an equitable and durable governance approach to enable a unified NDSR network
- Establishing a nonprofit entity for centralized services by using fees from individual programs
- Leveraging short-term commitments to contribute, participate, support, etc.
- Building current and future leadership through coaching and mentoring the network