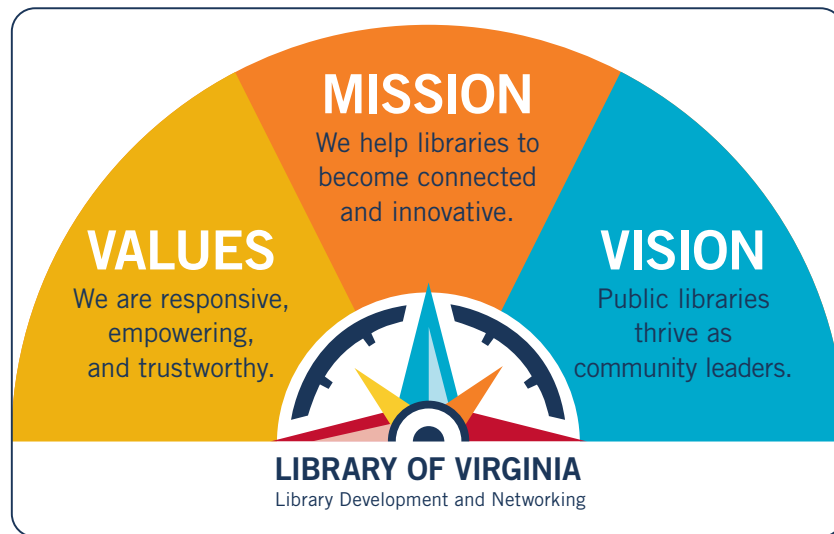


[illegible]

A stack of three books is shown on a wooden surface. The top book is open, and from its center, a series of glowing blue, concentric, wireframe-like rings emanate upwards, resembling a stylized energy field or data visualization. The background is dark with some light speckles, suggesting a night sky or a digital space.



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LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA



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Introduction

The phrase *strategic planning* is burdened with many definitions, cumbersome processes, and expensive consulting fees. This guide was created to clarify the meaning and outline a process that library directors and library boards can undertake themselves or with the assistance of the Library of Virginia's Library Networking and Development (LDND) staff with the goal of providing the best service to each library community for its unique needs.

In fact, strategic planning is simply answering the traditional six questions of *who, what, when, where, how* and *why*. The *who* and *why* will be addressed in Part 1 and are the heart of library service—vision, values and mission. The other questions are procedural and will be addressed in Part 2, allowing for annual adaptation as resources (capital, human, technological) evolve.

This guide will also help libraries “plan to plan,” and, as such, the entire process may take as little as three months and as much as a year. Good planning is time consuming. Good data gathering and analysis is time consuming. Getting the right parties together is time consuming. Strategic planning is time consuming. Libraries and their leaders should expect to pace themselves and not speed through the process for the sake of finishing. Certainly, the final plan will not be the final plan—there will never be a final plan as communities change, grow, shrink and shift. However, an accurate and thoughtful Part 1 may stand the test of time and allow Part 2 to easily adapt to community needs.

Parts 1 and 2 should be repeated in the fifth year of every five-year plan, to accommodate shifting community needs. Part 3 can be adapted each year of the five-year plan, as activities supporting the identified priorities evolve.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Strategic planning should never be a solo effort. Recruit a strategic planning committee made up of staff, trustees, Friends and Foundation leaders, and patrons/members of the public. When choosing committee members, consider achieving a diversity of age, origin, religious affiliation, etc., with an eye toward representing the community demographic (see more about that in Part 1). Smaller committees are easier to schedule and manage—six to nine people is plenty. Consider asking a community member who does NOT use the library, as their view may be entirely novel.

Part One: Creating Library Identity

WHERE ARE YOU?

Perhaps the easiest but the most uncomfortable part of strategic planning is looking in the mirror. However, a journey must start in the place one stands.

Planning for Library Excellence, 2021

(PFLE)¹ details essential, enhanced, and exemplary library standards. PFLE checklists enable a standardized approach to evaluating library services in terms of accepted Virginia expectations.

1. Print copies of the PFLE and its accompanying checklists, found on the InfoCenter, along this path (which is also linked in this pdf): <https://vpl.lib.va.us>Trustees, Friends, Foundations>Trustees>.
2. Gather the management team (director, department heads, managers—this may vary by library organization) to review PFLE and establish target dates for completion.
3. Delegate sections as appropriate to the individual: the director may keep administration and governance but delegate programming, technology and human resources to those managing those processes.
4. Each section is reviewed, item by item, to establish a starting point. This is NOT the time to place value judgments on whether the library meets a particular standard. It will be tempting (but not helpful) to offer excuses/defenses for why a standard is or is not met, although the Notes section of the checklist may be an opportunity to offer any relevant history. For example, if the library was found NOT to offer printing to the public because the printer is broken, this would be a relevant note.
5. The delegate for each section creates a summary of findings to be returned to the director.
6. The director collates a document with these summaries and results to be shared with the management team, examining any themes that emerge: Is there a trend that certain essential services are missing? Are accessibility standards frequently absent? And so on.
7. The management team may uncover some easy opportunities for improvement, such as getting the printer fixed in the example above. However, resist the urge to act on the results before moving through the next phases of the process. Ideas may begin to develop regarding possible improvements in service, but the management team would be wise to record those initial ideas for future reference and delay immediate action.

WHO ARE YOU?

In order to provide excellent library service, it is critical to know the community, as well as who is currently using the library—and who is not.

1. Who lives in the library service population? This question can be answered with some research within the [US Census Population Data](https://census.gov) (census.gov), to the county, town, and census district level, as well as the [Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service](https://demographics.coopercenter.org/population-data-all-overview) at the University of Virginia (https://demographics.coopercenter.org/population-data-all-overview). The data found there may answer questions about:

- a. Age range
- b. Educational attainment
- c. Income/poverty
- d. Languages spoken
- e. Types of family units (married, single head of household, widowed, etc.)
- f. Employment
- g. Industry
- h. Ethnicity and tribal identities

2. Who is currently using the library (and who is not)? Examine the reporting capacity of your integrated library system (ILS) and find as many matching data points as possible to those selected from the research above. Some of these data points are irrelevant and thus absent from library card information, much less from program attendance or computer usage, depending on the library. However, age ranges and geographical location generally can be established by library card data. The geographical question can sometimes offer insight into income representation. Map this information to identify where library usage is most prevalent, least prevalent, etc. Compare library cardholder data to census data to identify gaps in types of users. Municipal GIS (geographic information system) staff may be able to help with mapping data points.

Further, anecdotal information regarding specific communities present in the larger demographic might provide insight: Do Indigenous peoples hold land in

the area, such as the Monacans in Amherst County? Are there faith-based communities that live or worship there, such as the Mennonites in Rustburg? More importantly, do these communities use the library?

Review the resulting comparison of the local population and library users to identify who is not in the library. As in the “Where Are You?” section, set this data aside for future reference.

WHY DO YOU EXIST?

Most organizations have suffered through values, vision and mission statement exercises. Many people dread such activities, finding them wasteful of time and energy. Others love the introspection and wordsmithing that accompanies them. Managed well, defining the values, vision and mission of the organization is critical to the success of a strategic plan. Nothing serves as a better touchstone than a well-defined set of statements. Other planning models promote defining a mission first, but a path cannot be chosen if the destination is unclear. This guide promotes examining the vision for the community, and the values of the organization in pursuing that vision, followed by the mission of the library.

Values statements list the principles that guide and direct the organization and its culture. Vision statements describe the ideal state an organization wants to achieve. Mission statements define the driving force behind all activities, policies and procedures.

The following three activities could be held in one long session but may be more effective if done in two parts. First, the values session could be held as a stand-alone session, followed by a second session for vision and mission.

VALUES STATEMENT

Values express the shared attitudes and beliefs of the library staff and their governing body. They reflect how the principles guide everything the library does, from how it treats people (internally and externally) to policies and procedures to the impact the library has on the community.

The following activity is adapted from the 2018 Public Library Association Dynamic Planning Institute, presented by Stephanie Gerding². Conduct this activity with both staff and board members. Library of Virginia Library Development and Networking Division staff members stand ready to assist in conducting these activities, if desired. The values activity could be completed separately or together. If separately, the strategic planning committee will coalesce the ideas and finalize values for adoption.

1. Provide sticky notes or index cards to participants.
2. Invite participants to think about what is unique/special about the library's role in the community. Discuss these ideas.
3. Invite participants to brainstorm silently about all the values that come to mind when reflecting on the library and its service to the community and write them on the sticky notes/cards. Appendix 1 provides a reference list of values.
4. Invite participants to place their reflections in the designated space for all to view.
5. Collectively sort the cards/notes into categories that seem to fit together. These might include categories like how people are treated (for example, fairly) and how library operations occur (for example, transparently).
6. Collectively, choose representative words that represent those categories and prioritize them. These are your core values. For example, the Library of Virginia's Library Development and Networking Division (LDND) embraces the following values: "We are empowering, responsive, and trustworthy."³

LDND endeavors to live this out by empowering library staff to accomplish their own goals; responding quickly to any query, request or phone call; and being stewards of confidentiality, funds and resources so that libraries may have confidence in seeking LDND assistance. These values support the vision that "public libraries thrive as connected community leaders."⁴

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement describes the future state to which an organization aspires. The vision statement should be about the organization as it relates to the community LDND's vision statement, "Public libraries thrive as community leaders," is an aspirational statement that describes the future state of how public libraries exist if LDND accomplishes its mission. The vision statement can also serve as an inspiration and challenge for stakeholders. Useful questions to ask the previously identified stakeholder groups are:

- What problem are we seeking to solve?
- Where are we headed?
- If we achieve our goals, what would we look like 10 years from now?

Avoid wordsmithing and focus on the common threads among all the participant groups. Deciding on the exact language will be the role of the strategic planning committee.

MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is a concise explanation of an organization's reason for existence and describes its purpose, intention and overall objectives. The mission statement supports the vision and serves to communicate purpose and direction to employees, customers, vendors, and other stakeholders.⁴ In short, if someone was watching, how would they know what you were trying to do? Returning to the LDND example, the mission statement is, "We help libraries become connected and innovative."⁵ This statement can be a litmus test, along with the vision statement, for any action, decision, policy, etc., a library enjoins. Does the [activity, decision, etc.] pursue the goal of helping libraries become connected and innovative? The mission statement answers the question posed by the vision statement: How will the desired state become a reality?

A useful question to ask is, "What is our organization's purpose?" Again, the stakeholder groups identified

above are excellent audiences for this question.
Appendix 2 provides some useful links to short videos
that illustrate the concept.

Part Two: Charting the Path Forward

Once established, the library identity needs to be set to work. How will the library uphold its mission and values and fulfill its vision in service to the community? This question should not be answered in a vacuum. Engaging the community is critical. The Library of Virginia's Library Development and Networking Division staff are trained in the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation model and are prepared to help plan and conduct community conversations.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

WHY?

Community conversations help uncover public knowledge—that is, knowledge that comes only from engaging in conversation with people in the community. Only the people within the community themselves can tell us their aspirations, concerns and how they see different facets of their community.⁶

WHAT?

Community conversations are held in small groups of 15 individuals or fewer. Larger groups may be used if broken into subgroups, with facilitators embedded in each small group. Members of the strategic planning committee are ideal facilitators who can be prepared and supported by the LDND team. Each group will need a recorder so that the facilitator can actively listen. Practicing with the previously described stakeholder groups is a good way to prepare for inviting the community into conversation, while also getting their participation in the process.

WHERE?

When scheduling conversations, plan for a space that is inviting and comfortable. Plan to hold conversations in various locations throughout the community—recreation halls, senior adult living, housing development communities, faith communities, etc. Community members will feel safer and provide more open responses in a familiar location. Vary

the times of day and days of the week to increase participation by all members of the community. Consider language interpretation needs and provide them where appropriate. Provide refreshments where possible, recruiting library Friends/Foundation members for support. Consider incentivizing participation with a valued door prize. It is important to market the opportunity to the community through regular channels, but also in ways that might reach populations who are NOT active library users. Specifically assigning trustees and other strategic planning committee members to invite someone they know who does NOT use the library is an effective strategy.

HOW?

Introduce strategic planning committee members present. Explain that the library seeks community knowledge to help plan for the future. Allow individuals two minutes to introduce themselves. Consider framing the introduction with their name and some fun fact, such as their favorite book, food, etc.

Set the following ground rules:

- Everyone participates; no one dominates.
- There are no “right answers.” We draw on our own experiences, views and beliefs. You do not need to be an expert.
- Keep an open mind—listen carefully and try to hear and understand the views of others, especially those with whom you may disagree.
- Help keep the conversation on track—stick to the questions. Try not ramble.
- It's okay to disagree, but do not be disagreeable. Respond to others how you want them to respond to you.
- Have fun!

THE QUESTIONS:

Note that not all questions may be answered in the time allotted. Answer as many as you can. Subquestions listed below can take the conversation further for clarification. Appendix 3 includes worksheets that can be photocopied for use in conversations.

1. What kind of community do you want?
 - a. Why is that important?
 - b. How is that different from the way things are now?
2. Given what was just said, what are the two or three most important issues or concerns regarding the community?
 - a. Decide which issue is most important for the group and use it for the remainder of the discussion.
 - b. If the strategic planning committee has a specific issue they want to address, introduce it here as a litmus test.
3. What concerns do you have about this issue? Why?
 - a. Does it seem like things are getting better? Worse? What makes you say that?
 - b. How do you think the issue/concern came about?
4. How do the issues we are talking about affect you personally?
 - a. What personal experiences have you had?
 - b. How about people around you? What do see them experiencing?
 - c. Are some people affected more than others are? Who? In what ways? Why?
5. When you think about these things, how do you feel about what is going on?
 - a. Why do you feel this way?
 - b. How do you think other people (in other parts of town, etc.) feel about this?
6. What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want?
7. When you think about what we have talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done that would make a difference?
 - a. What do you think these things might accomplish?
 - b. In terms of individuals, what kinds of things could people like us do to make a difference?
 - c. What is important for us to keep in mind when we think about moving ahead?
8. Thinking back over the conversation, which groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?
 - a. Why them and not others?
9. If we came back together in six months or a year, what might you see that would tell you that the things we talked about tonight were starting to happen?
 - a. Why would that suggest things were changing?
10. Now that we have talked about this issue a bit, what questions do you have about it?
 - a. What do you feel you would like to know more about that would help you make better sense of what is going on and what should be done?
 - b. What kind of follow-up would you like out of this discussion?

THE OUTCOMES

Once community conversations are complete, collate answers and study them for themes and trends. Pro tip: dump all the summaries into a word cloud application, such as Trello or Slido. These themes and trends will be those issues that appear most frequently.

Certainly, not all the issues produced in the community conversations will be issues the library can fix, but the committee should look for issues that can have a “library response.” For example, an influx of unhoused people in a community would not call for a library to open a shelter. Instead, a library response may include evaluating and adapting policies to be more inclusive of unhoused people, such as not requiring an address for a library card. The Friends of the Library may produce hygiene packs to distribute. Staff may engage in training for interacting and serving the unhoused and creating a resource tool of all community resources available.

Outreach Services may host community partners to visit the library to serve the unhoused with offerings such as mobile shower and laundry services, etc.

This example demonstrates how a library might choose from among three options: lead, support/partner or follow. In the unhoused scenario, the library would be a supporter or partner. There may be other issues in which the library is identified as a leader or a follower.

Once identified, engage the strategic planning committee in ranking issues that mesh with the library's values, vision and mission, along with staff capacity. Choose as few or as many on which the library can potentially produce measurable results. Pressure-test these identified priorities with staff, asking them to identify:

- What processes/procedures stand in the way of this priority?
- What programming and collections need to be developed?
- What partnerships might be developed?
- Does the library have the capacity (time, funds, space, buy-in) to do these things?

The resulting list becomes the library's strategic priorities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Often articulated as bullet points, strategic priorities serve as the touchstone for process, procedure and programming for library staff.

Continuing the example of unhoused people, a strategic priority might be stated:

- Serve the unhoused members of our community

Many priorities uncovered may fall under a broader category. For example, the American Library Association's *Strategic Planning for Results* (by Sandra Green), proposes a wide variety of choices for priorities that include:

- *Community:* My library will be a central source for information about the wide variety of

programs, services and activities provided by community agencies and organizations.

- *Enterprise:* My library will provide resources to develop and maintain strong, viable business and nonprofit organizations.
- *Creativity:* My library will help people express themselves through resources and partnerships that support arts, crafts, writing and audiovisual content.
- *Young Readers:* My library will support children from birth to age 5 to enter school ready to learn, read, write and listen.
- *Civic Duty:* My library will provide the community the information they need to support and promote democracy, participate in community decision making, and fulfill their civic responsibilities at all levels.
- *School Success:* Students of all ages will have the resources they need to succeed in school.
- *Diversity:* My library will have programs and services that promote appreciation and understanding of the heritage of all within the community.
- *Informed Decisions:* My library will provide resources needed to analyze benefits and costs before making decisions about health, wealth and other important choices.
- *Online Access:* My library will provide high-speed access to the online world for everyone, with no fees or unnecessary restrictions.
- *Career Support:* My library will support job seekers with the resources they need to gain skills, identify job opportunities and advance their careers.
- *Hospitality:* My library will provide safe and welcoming physical places for pleasurable reading, viewing and listening experiences, as well as space to meet and connect with others.

- *Adult Literacy:* My library will provide support to help the community members improve their literacy skills in order to meet their personal goals and fulfill their responsibilities as parents, citizens and workers.
- *Welcome Neighbors:* My library will provide information on citizenship, learning to speak English, employment, schooling, health, safety, social services and more to people who are new to our country.
- *Curiosity:* My library will provide the resources people need to explore topics of personal interest and lifelong learning.
- *History:* My library will provide the resources the community needs to connect the past with the present through local and family history.
- *Understanding Information:* My library will support the community with the reputable information sources, skills and experts they need to in order to resolve an issue or answer a question.⁷

These priorities would benefit from consolidation of topics and considerations from the post-pandemic era. However, they offer an excellent example of how a strategic priority could be phrased. Indeed, a priority regarding unhoused people might fall under Hospitality, Community and Diversity. The strategic planning committee may opt to group priorities in a similar manner. Once affirmed and organized, these priorities would guide all the library responses, from procedure to programming and partnerships.

THE ONE PAGE STRATEGIC PLAN

THE DOCUMENT

The goal of the actual document is to demonstrate what the public can expect from the library, the values from which flow its actions, and the goals the library pursues. The document may be used to market the library to its users, its elected officials, its funding bodies and potential partners and donors. The one-page strategic plan is a graphically simple and easy-to-read document. Enlist a graphic designer to help with its production. The document would include:

1. Mission, vision and values statements
2. Strategic priorities
3. Library logo
4. Contact information

The document should be created in multiple formats for distribution as physical copies, digital assets for social media and webpages, and posters for placement in libraries. Consider this document as the library's road map to success.

EXAMPLES

Find below several examples of one-page strategic plans.

Note that these examples differ in layout, wording and choice of inclusion, but all feature the same types of information. This document is where the library adds its own flavor and style to the one-page strategic plan.

Strategic Plan 2020-2024



Plainfield
PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT



VISION

Educate. Captivate. Connect.



MISSION

We strive to educate, inform, entertain, and culturally enrich our community.



EDUCATE

We inform and engage our community.

Engagement opportunities build awareness of and support for the library.



CAPTIVATE

We open minds and enrich lives.

Create meaningful opportunities for individuals to explore and create.



CONNECT

We evolve and grow.

Expand points of service and resources.

GOALS

Build library presence in the community by looking for outreach and collaboration opportunities.

Increase awareness of all the Library has to offer.

GOALS

Promote literacy, curiosity, and the love of reading by creating collections that respond to community needs.

Enhance and grow connections through vibrant programs and access to technology.

GOALS

Reduce barriers to service by making access convenient.

Increase Library resources to ensure growth and sustainability.



STRATEGIC GOALS 2022-2025

- **COMMUNITY:** WCLS is at the heart of the community, introducing neighbors, building connections, and creating opportunities to learn from each other and understand one another.
- **ACCESS:** All Whatcom County residents are aware of the full range of WCLS services and can easily access them.
- **RESOURCES:** Community members choose library materials as catalysts for imagination, exploration, learning and growth.
- **EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION:** WCLS is intentional in our commitment to serving everyone in our communities equitably.
- **STEWARDSHIP:** WCLS earns the trust of the residents of Whatcom County through responsible, efficient and sustainable business practices.

Our bottom line: WCLS CARES.

2018 STRATEGIC PLAN *at a Glance*

Core Values

- Service
- Responsiveness
- Innovation
- Accessibility

Mission

To inform, inspire, and enrich the Avalon community near and far.

Vision

Guide Avalon's informational resources into the future with innovation and great service.

Goals

- **INCREASE USE** - Facilitate maximum community use of Library resources and services through local and remote access.
- **SPREAD AWARENESS** - Attain widespread community awareness of the full array of Library resources and services.
- **FOSTER INNOVATION** - Make the Library a creative and dynamic place to be.

Measures of Success

- High ratio of property owners: satisfied card holders (satisfaction judged through formal surveying and informal direct feedback).
- Circulation (print and digital), program attendance, and visitation increased/maintained, in keeping with rate of active card holders.
- High engagement in History Center initiatives, judged through visitation, program attendance, object donations, and Historical Society activity.
- Increased digital engagement, both Library and History Center.
- Staff retention and positive morale.

Selected Projects

- Improve the Library's website and develop easy to use tutorials to assist patrons with the use of online resources.
- Curate digital resources to ensure they are innovative and relevant.
- Improve tools for surveying to ensure responsive programming and events.
- Implement a One Book, One Community program to foster a sense of community through literature and discussion.
- Implement a Library Book Bike program to gain awareness in the community and reach new users.
- Form a staff technology committee tasked with guiding the organization's technology goals with an eye on the initiatives.
- Stream and record programs and events for expanded access.
- Identify opportunities to increase acquisition and donation of objects for the historic collection.



MARKETING

Once completed, make the most of the one-page strategic plan by circulating it to targeted entities. Circulating the document, with a letter of explanation and outcomes as they occur, keeps the library and its work and accomplishments in front of elected officials and is especially effective OUTSIDE the budget season.

ELECTED OFFICIALS/FUNDING BODIES

Schedule an agenda item with the governing body (city/town councils, board of supervisors) to present the plan and how it will be operationalized (discussed in Part 3). Every year, follow it annually with outcomes, such as “fewer complaints about the unhoused people in our libraries” or “Mr. Smith was able to find a job by using library supports.” This will remind elected officials of the value of the library and the library’s stewardship of tax dollars.

Schedule a meeting with your state legislators when they are in town or attend one of their community town halls. In doing so, the library builds awareness and value

with their elected officials and provides a top-of-mind message of service and stewardship to the community.

THE PUBLIC AND PATRONS

This document should be in plain view of the community wherever possible—on posters in the library and as the first slide in any community presentation. Converted into a bookmark, the plan can be slipped into books as they circulate. Draft it as a rack card and place copies in your local museums, laundromats, tourism office and other community assets.

DONORS AND PARTNERS

The one-page strategic plan should be included in grant applications, thank-you notes, fundraising campaigns, and proposals. Donors and partners, particularly POTENTIAL donors and partners, will value the document as a quick way to ascertain whether the library is a good fit for their resources. It can assure them that the library has a plan—a thoughtful, well laid out and achievable plan.

TIMELINE

This strategic planning process may seem overwhelming and lengthy, but it may be accomplished

in as little as three to six months, depending on library size. Consider the following schedule:

Task	1st month	2nd month	3rd month	4th month	5th month	6–7 months
Define and Recruit SPC*	Director	Director				
Planning for Library Excellence Review	Staff	Staff	Staff			
Census Data Analysis	Staff	Staff				
Values Activities	Director / SPC	Director / SPC				
Community Conversations			Director / SPC / LDND**	Director / SPC / LDND		
Compile Strategic Priorities				Director / SPC	Director / SPC	
Develop Action Plan, with Measurable Outcomes						Director / Staff
Craft and Market Document						Director / SPC

*SPC=Strategic Planning Committee

**LDND=Library of Virginia Library Development and Networking Division Staff

Part Three: Operationalize the Plan

Now that the strategic planning committee has completed its work, library staff members give the strategic plan steam. During the strategic priority discussions, staff weighed in and considered what the priorities might look like in action, but now they may build concrete plans and projects based on the priorities. Some core activities may not change, but others may require adjustment and modification while new activities develop.

PLANNING THE LIBRARY PROGRAM

Division managers will now spend time examining their division's activities and assigning them priorities as is relevant. Once that is completed, division managers can help staff articulate how and why their activity supports the strategic priorities. Empowering staff to develop these talking points is critical to the success and ownership of the plan and reinforces its principles with the public. Each division will evaluate which priorities they need to focus on and develop new plans and projects accordingly. Planning should be done in the context of the strategic plan, and managers may find it useful to have staff identify which priority the new effort will address in the proposal for the plan/project. For example, a proposed new program must be tied to a specific priority with measures of success included in the plan. Continuing the example of the unhoused, staff members may propose a library guide or other resource for unhoused people. They may propose identifying resources and creating a professional development experience for their colleagues. Their proposal would identify:

- The appropriate priority
- The actions they wish to take
- How they will measure success
- Timeline for the project
- An after-action review of success

A template for use and/or example is found in Appendix 4.

Managers will develop timelines for execution of projects/plans in pursuit of priorities over the next four-year span, allowing for “just in time” opportunities as well as budgeting for both capital and human resources.

EVALUATING SUCCESS

For every priority, a measure of success is required. How will the library know it has met or made progress toward the priority? To whom should libraries report success? How will failures inform next attempts? Libraries who regularly review their successes and failures—from procedure shifts to programs to communications—will succeed. Having put so much effort into defining priorities, libraries need to place equal emphasis on evaluation.

OUTCOME BASED EVALUATION

Outputs include the things libraries are excellent at counting: circulation, attendance, door counts, titles added, etc. Outcomes, however, are often overlooked. Outcomes define the change in the state of XYZ because of the library intervention. For example, 150 hygiene kits were distributed to unhoused patrons, resulting in fewer complaints by other patrons regarding the unhoused. Unhoused patrons reported increased self-respect, health and positive interactions with other people. The 150 kits distributed is an output, while, the decreased complaints and increased positive interactions are outcomes. Both are needed to tell the entire value story of this intervention. This type of evaluation is called “outcome-based evaluation.” While beyond the purview of this document, outcome-based evaluation is addressed extensively in the Library of Virginia Niche Academy, and members of the Library of Virginia's Library Development and Networking team are well trained in these processes.

FAIL FORWARD

Creating a culture of experimentation regarding priorities is critical. Leaders, managers and staff must expect some degree of failure from which to learn, adjust and try again. Iterative design creates eventual

success, and leaders and managers must empower staff in this process. After-action review offers just such an opportunity, asking questions such as “What worked?” and “How/where can we improve?”

REPORTING OUTCOMES

Just as it is critical to let the public know the library plan, it is equally critical to market library outcomes. Each year of the strategic plan provides a new opportunity to update elected officials, patrons, the public, donors and partners on what the library has achieved, what the library has learned, and where the library is headed next. Reporting on outcomes to elected officials can accompany the annual communication of the one-page strategic plan, using the previously recommended tactics. When an effort did not work out as planned, reporting lessons learned earns trust in the library’s communications. It can also engender conversation and perhaps new communications about additional strategies and partners. When efforts succeed, excellent! It is easy to report on success. Both, however, are necessary.

Part Four: Strategic Planning and State Aid

The Library of Virginia administers state aid to libraries, as funded by the Virginia General Assembly. Strategic planning is among the several requirements to receive state aid. The plan must be updated annually. The Library of Virginia offers this guidance⁸ regarding the necessary elements of a strategic plan:

For best results, it should be specific to the community and include the following:

- A statement of community needs, incorporated into the library vision statement
- A statement of the library's mission, which describes the services it will provide to meet community needs
- A statement of the library's goals with objectives that convert to action
- A timetable for achieving goals—both short and long range
- Details of the services, programs and developments desired
- Data supporting the community needs included in the plan—surveys, census data and studies
- A plan within a plan for implementation
- General assignments for the sections of the plan (For example, if the plan suggests closer relationships with community groups, then the assignment would be to the board and the staff to develop ways to do this.)
- Examination of the budget for ways to begin implementation (For example, consider shifting budget amounts from one purpose to another or think of ways to support a new project from the plan.)
- Cooperation with public officials to achieve financial needs
- Development of flexible public relations and publicity
- Reasonable priorities that recognize the capacity of the library and the community

The items highlighted in blue are achieved in the One-Page Strategic Plan. The remaining details are the purview of the “operationalize” section of this workbook, geared toward staff. Libraries do NOT need to complete a new one-page plan annually, but rather every fifth year with updates submitted annually. The annual update of the library's strategic plan may be achieved by submitting a new narrative, commenting on work accomplished (citing outcomes) and lessons learned, as well as any deviations, editions or deletions from the year's plan. When submitting to LDND, please make sure the revision date is clearly marked on the front page and in the file name.

An outline for the annual narrative should include

- Projects that were completed, delayed or eliminated
- Narrative of lessons learned, challenges encountered, etc.
- Description of outcomes from the previous year
- Project expectations in the coming year, including anticipated outcomes
- A Gantt chart with priorities, action and staff outlined for the coming year. The chart on page 15 in the “Timeline” section of this workbook is an example of a Gantt chart. Many Gantt chart templates are available online.

The Library of Virginia's Library Development and Networking Division shares the view that planning is fluid and cyclical, certainly a lesson from the pandemic. These submissions do not require libraries to perform the exact actions or financial appropriations as described. Rather, the submission provides the bumpers between which the library intends to move forward.

Conclusion

Strategic planning, done well, develops a strong plan for library services. Strategic planning reduces surprises. Strategic planning articulates library value. Strategic planning empowers staff. Most importantly, strategic planning improves community services. Every library may develop a unique strategic planning process as it adapts the information found here. The process described may be used on the departmental level using a library's own target audience. Regardless, the Library Development and Networking Division at the Library of Virginia is available to all Virginia libraries as a planning resource, for as much or as little help is needed, as the division seeks to live out its own values, vision and mission.

End Notes

¹ Library of Virginia, Library Development and Networking Division. 2021. "Planning for Library Excellence." Richmond.

² Strategic Human Resource Management. 2023. *What is the difference between mission, vision and values statements?* Los Angeles, California.

³ Gerding, Stephanie. 2018. "Dynamic Planning Institute." *Dynamic Planning*. Online: Public Library Association.

⁴ Library of Virginia. 2018. *Library Development and Networking Mission, Vision, and Values*. Richmond: Library of Virginia.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. 2017. *Public Innovators Lab Guide*. Chicago: American Library Association.

⁸ Green, Sandra. 2008. *Planning for Results*. Chicago: American Library Association.

⁹ Library of Virginia, Library Development and Networking Division. 2018. Richmond.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: CORE VALUES LIST

Source: <https://www.threads culture.com/blog/company-culture/core-values-list-threads/>

CORE VALUES LIST:

Above and Beyond	Dependability	Individuality	Reason
Acceptance	Depth	Industry	Recognition
Accessibility	Determination	Informal	Recreation
Accomplishment	Determined	Innovation	Refined
Accountability	Development	Innovative	Reflection
Accuracy	Devotion	Inquisitive	Relationships
Accurate	Devout	Insight	Relaxation
Achievement	Different	Insightful	Reliability
Activity	Differentiation	Inspiration	Reliable
Adaptability	Dignity	Integrity	Resilience
Adventure	Diligence	Intelligence	Resolute
Adventurous	Direct	Intensity	Resolution
Affection	Directness	International	Resolve
Affective	Discipline	Intuition	Resourceful
Aggressive	Discovery	Intuitive	Resourcefulness
Agility	Discretion	Invention	Respect
Aggressiveness	Diversity	Investing	Respect for Others
Alert	Dominance	Investment	Respect for the Individual
Alertness	Down-to-Earth	Inviting	Responsibility
Altruism	Dreaming	Irreverence	Responsiveness
Ambition	Drive	Irreverent	Rest
Amusement	Duty	Joy	Restraint
Anti-Bureaucratic	Eagerness	Justice	Results
Anticipate	Ease of Use	Kindness	Results-Oriented
Anticipation	Economy	Knowledge	Reverence
Anti-Corporate	Education	Leadership	Rigor
Appreciation	Effective	Learning	Risk
Approachability	Effectiveness	Legal	Risk Taking
Approachable	Efficiency	Level-Headed	Rule of Law
Assertive	Efficient	Liberty	Sacrifice
Assertiveness	Elegance	Listening	Safety
Attention to Detail	Empathy	Lively	Sanitary
Attentive	Employees	Local	Satisfaction
Attentiveness	Empower	Logic	Security
Availability	Empowering	Longevity	Self-Awareness
Available	Encouragement	Love	Self-Motivation
Awareness	Endurance	Loyalty	Self-Responsibility
Balance	Energy	Mastery	Self-Control

Beauty	Engagement	Maturity	Self-Directed
Being the Best	Enjoyment	Maximizing	Selfless
Belonging	Entertainment	Maximum Utilization	Self-Reliance
Best	Enthusiasm	Meaning	Sense of Humor
Best People	Entrepreneurship	Meekness	Sensitivity
Bold	Environment	Mellow	Serenity
Boldness	Equality	Members	Serious
Bravery	Equitable	Merit	Service
Brilliance	Ethical	Meritocracy	Shared Prosperity
Brilliant	Exceed Expectations	Meticulous	Sharing
Calm	Excellence	Mindful	Shrewd
Calmness	Excitement	Moderation	Significance
Candor	Exciting	Modesty	Silence
Capability	Exhilarating	Motivation	Silliness
Capable	Exuberance	Mystery	Simplicity
Careful	Experience	Neatness	Sincerity
Carefulness	Expertise	Nerve	Skill
Caring	Exploration	No Bureaucracy	Skillfulness
Certainty	Explore	Obedience	Smart
Challenge	Expressive	Open	Solitude
Change	Extrovert	Open-Minded	Speed
Character	Fairness	Openness	Spirit
Charity	Faith	Optimism	Spirituality
Cheerful	Faithfulness	Order	Spontaneous
Citizenship	Family	Organization	Stability
Clean	Family Atmosphere	Original	Standardization
Cleanliness	Famous	Originality	Status
Clear	Fashion	Outrageous	Stealth
Clear-Minded	Fast	Partnership	Stewardship
Clever	Fearless	Passion	Strength
Clients	Ferocious	Patience	Structure
Collaboration	Fidelity	Patient-Centered	Succeed
Comfort	Fierce	Patient-Focused	Success
Commitment	Firm	Patients	Support
Common Sense	Fitness	Patient-Satisfaction	Surprise
Communication	Flair	Patriotism	Sustainability
Community	Flexibility	Peace	Sympathy
Compassion	Flexible	People	Synergy
Competence	Fluency	Perception	Systemization
Competency	Focus	Perceptive	Talent
Competition	Focus on Future	Perfection	Teamwork
Competitive	Foresight	Performance	Temperance
Completion	Formal	Perseverance	Thankful
Composure	Fortitude	Persistence	Thorough

Comprehensive	Freedom	Personal Development	Thoughtful
Concentration	Fresh	Personal Growth	Timeliness
Concern for Others	Fresh Ideas	Persuasive	Timely
Confidence	Friendly	Philanthropy	Tolerance
Confidential	Friendship	Play	Tough
Confidentiality	Frugality	Playfulness	Toughness
Conformity	Fun	Pleasantness	Traditional
Connection	Generosity	Poise	Training
Consciousness	Genius	Polish	Tranquility
Consistency	Giving	Popularity	Transparency
Content	Global	Positive	Trust
Contentment	Goodness	Potency	Trustworthy
Continuity	Goodwill	Potential	Truth
Continuous Improvement	Gratitude	Power	Understanding
Contribution	Great	Powerful	Unflappable
Control	Greatness	Practical	Unique
Conviction	Growth	Pragmatic	Uniqueness
Cooperation	Guidance	Precise	Unity
Coordination	Happiness	Precision	Universal
Cordiality	Hard Work	Prepared	Useful
Correct	Harmony	Preservation	Utility
Courage	Health	Pride	Valor
Courtesy	Heart	Privacy	Value
Craftiness	Helpful	Proactive	Value Creation
Craftsmanship	Heroism	Proactively	Variety
Creation	History	Productivity	Victorious
Creative	Holiness	Profane	Victory
Creativity	Honesty	Professionalism	Vigor
Credibility	Honor	Profitability	Virtue
Cunning	Hope	Profits	Vision
Curiosity	Hopeful	Progress	Vital
Customer Focus	Hospitality	Prosperity	Vitality
Customer Satisfaction	Humble	Prudence	Warmth
Customer Service	Humility	Punctuality	Watchful
Customers	Humor	Purity	Watchfulness
Daring	Hygiene	Pursue	Wealth
Decency	Imagination	Pursuit	Welcoming
Decisive	Impact	Quality	Willfulness
Decisiveness	Impartial	Quality of Work	Winning
Dedication	Impious	Rational	Wisdom
Delight	Improvement	Real	Wonder
Democratic	Independence	Realistic	Worldwide
			Work/Life Balance

APPENDIX 2: MEDIA LINKS FOR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

- A Simple Introduction to Mission, Vision and Values (6 minutes) by Flex Talk
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mWQh_7fK3U
- How to Write a Mission Statement that Doesn't Suck (4 minutes) by Fast Company
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJhG3HZ7b4o>
- Mission, Vision and Value Statements (6 minutes) by the 365 Analyst
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wem6FZAucw>

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS QUESTIONS

1. What kind of a community do you want?
 - a. Why is that important?
 - b. How is that different from the way things are now?
2. Given what we just said, what are the two or three most important issues or concerns regarding the community?
 - a. Decide which issue is most important for the group and use it for the discussion.
3. What worries you about this issue? Why?
 - a. Does it seem like things are getting better? Worse? What makes you say that?
 - b. How do you think the issue/concern came about?
4. How do the issues we're talking about affect you personally?
 - a. What personal experiences have you had?
 - b. How about people around you? Family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, others? What do you see them experiencing?
 - c. Are some people affected more than others? Who? In what ways? Why?
5. How do you feel about what's going on?
 - a. Why do you feel this way?
 - b. How do you think other people (in different parts of town) feel about this?
6. What do you think is keeping us from making the progress we want?
7. What are the kinds of things that could be done that would make a difference?
 - a. What do you think these things might accomplish?
 - b. What are the kinds of things that people like us could do to make a difference?
 - c. What's important to keep in mind when we think about moving ahead?
8. Which groups or individuals do you think could take action on these things?
 - a. Why them and not others?
9. In six months or a year from now, what might you see that would tell you things were happening from the conversation we had today?
 - a. Why would that suggest things were changing? What would it mean to see that?
10. What do you feel you'd like to know more about that would help you make better sense of what's going on and what should be done?
11. What kind of follow-up would you like from this discussion?

APPENDIX 4: PROJECT PLANNING TEMPLATE

PROJECT WORKSHEET

Project owner:

Project name:

Brief description of the project:

Phase 1: Initiation

1. What part of the library's mission, vision and values does this project advance?
2. Why do you think this will make a difference?
3. Who is going to care that we do this (supporters AND detractors)?
4. What will be the direct outcome? Not the output!

Phase 2: Definition

1. What are your goals (the long-term outcome—the broad, intangible benefit)?
2. What are your objectives (short term, specific, tangible actions to move closer to the goal)?
3. Describe these activities from start to finish.
4. List likely obstacles or risks.

Phase 3: Planning

1. Identify the resources needed:
 - a. human (i.e., staff, volunteers)
 - b. tangible (craft supplies, projector, handouts, snacks)
 - c. Intangible (time, buy-in)
2. How will you measure your results (outcomes)? Identify at least three tools.
3. At what points will you measure your results?
4. What will you do if your results aren't where they should be?
5. What is your timeline? (Pro tip: Begin at the end and work backwards, then build in 20% more time)
6. Communication plan: At what points are communication needed up, down and laterally across the organization. (Pro tip: You cannot overcommunicate)

Phase 4: Execution

Relevant tasks:

- Keeping tabs on the
 - Humans
 - Tangible resources
 - Schedule
 - Data
 - Risks
 - Obstacles
- Adjust as needed based on data from your outcome measurements.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Phase 5: Complete Project

1. Debrief: Who should attend the debrief?
2. What questions do you want to ask of yourself/the project/the team at the debrief?
3. How will you celebrate?
4. How and with whom will you share your new knowledge and/or project results?
(Identify at least three possibilities)

