Norfolk Public Library
Strategic Plan
2020 - 2025

Lifelong Learning

Access to Resources

Community Engagement

Introduction & Background

The Norfolk Public Library (NPL) serves the residents in Norfolk (population 24,210) and many residents in the surrounding communities in northeast Nebraska (population around 100,000). NPL has almost 13,000 current cardholders and circulates almost 270,000 items annually. The library is known for excellent programs for people of all ages, holding 382 programs per year with 12,962 people attending.[1] The library completed an expansion and renovation in May 2018 and has experienced a significant increase in usage.

This plan represents the overall strategy for the library over the next five years and is presented to the Citizens Library Advisory Board for approval in November 2019. Upon approval, library staff will finalize an activity plan to support the overall strategy and evolve as we work toward goals. Staff will regularly review progress toward meeting plan goals and report to the Board.

Our planning process was inclusive and enlightening. We remain committed to our community and core services and are excited about the focus this plan will bring through 2025. We hope this plan inspires growth and change over the next five years that lead to increased impact in our community.

Library Director Jessica Chamberlain formed a Planning Team to guide the strategic planning process. Planning Team members included:

- o Denise Wilkinson, Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce
- o MaryLouise Foster, Northeast Community College
- o Dr. Patti Gubbels, Norfolk Public Schools Board of Education
- o Denice Hansen, Norfolk Arts Center
- o Susan Colligan, Citizens Library Advisory Board
- o Sue Burns, Citizens Library Advisory Board

The library engaged consultant Amanda E. Standerfer from Fast Forward Libraries to conduct Board and staff retreats and bring plan elements together into a draft for the Board's consideration.

Planning Process & Data Highlights

In order to create a cohesive, actionable plan, we reviewed a wide variety of existing data, conducted a community survey, gathered input from staff/Board through a survey and retreat, and spent time talking with the Planning Team about the future of the library.[2] The community

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[1] Library statistics from September 2017 – October 2018.
[2] See full Survey and Focus Group Summary Report in Appendix.

survey was key for understanding current library strengths, services valued by the community, and areas of focus for future growth.

The community survey was completed by 251 residents. These evaluation methods revealed that the library has strong community support, with 90% stating that the quality of the library is above average or excellent. The new drive-up book drop, popular and educational reading materials, and the Summer Reading Program were cited as important to the community. Having computers and WiFi access along with materials in other formats were also ranked as valuable in the survey. Survey respondents praised the building and the friendliness of the staff. The variety of programs to learn, be informed, and connect with others was listed as something to expand.

At the July retreats, Board and staff members reviewed the Learning Report and narrowed strategic directions and goals. Staff focused on possible activities to achieve plan goals. The retreat sessions brought cohesion to the developing plan and allowed for the plan's design to emerge. The Board spent time refining the vision and mission statements, settling on final statements at their September Board meeting.

Vision

Empowering the community through education and engagement.

At the Board retreat, the central theme of the library as a place where people can be empowered through education and engagement emerged. The library aspires to help people improve their lives by connecting them to resources and programs to help them learn and grow. The library is also a place to engage with people through reading and learning and to connect people to each other. In this way, the library is a community gathering place, centered around books and other materials. We are inspired by our vision to empower the community and strive to provide educational and engagement opportunities to meet their needs.

Mission

We engage the community through learning opportunities, connection to resources and technology, and cultural enrichment.

The mission statement reflects the work the library will do to achieve its vision for the community. The three key pieces of the mission emerged from the community survey, Board and staff retreats, and additional Board discussions: 1) Provide a variety of diverse and interesting learning and literacy opportunities, 2) connect people to resources (no matter the format) and technology, and 3) enrich lives through exposure to cultural programs. These three elements of the mission clearly state what the community can expect from the library and the

library can communicate about the plethora of services, programs, and materials used to carry out the mission.

Strategic Directions, Goals, Activities, & Measures

This plan is divided into three strategic directions that emerged during the planning process:

Lifelong Learning

Access to Resources

Community Engagement

These strategic initiatives emerged during the planning process after review of community survey and Library data, meetings with the Board and staff, and discussions with the planning team.

The following graphic summarizes the strategic plan, followed by additional detail for each strategic direction, including potential activities for each goal and possible metrics. Library staff will draft the activity plan that will serve as an implementation guide. Regular activity updates will be presented at future Board meetings.

Lifelong Learning

We engage all ages in learning opportunities for personal growth.

Providing programming is a cornerstone of the library's services. Community survey respondents indicated interest in more programming and this strategic direction focuses those efforts on programming for education and growth, cultural understanding and connections, and creating and creativity. There is a mix of current, enhanced, and new activities that staff will explore in the activity plan. Key to measuring progress towards these goals is collecting feedback from program attendees. Regularly reviewing program satisfaction and learning feedback along with ideas for future programs will allow staff to respond to community interests and needs in a more connected and informed way.

Goal	Possible Activities	Possible Measures of Success
We enrich lives through programs for education and growth.	o Literacy programs and Summer Reading o Library tours o Speaker series	o Number of programs and attendees o Post-program surveys to record satisfaction, learning, and ideas for future programs
We deepen cultural understanding by bringing the community together.	o One Book, One City o Bi-lingual programs o Cultural series o Conversation Groups	o Number of programs and attendees o Post-program surveys (see above)
We inspire creating and creativity.	o Continue developing the makerspace o Hobby program series	o Number of programs and attendees o Post-program surveys (see above)

Access to Resources

We make it easy for people to find materials, information, and technology they need.

Community members are not always aware of the wide variety of materials and information that the library has in various formats. This strategic direction focuses efforts to increase awareness of all that the library provides for the community, which includes technology access at the library and at home through remote services. This strategic direction will focus staff activities on continuing to build a collection and provide technology access that is vital to many community members. Plus, staff will spend time learning about how patrons access library materials (in the library and online) to see if navigation can be made more intuitive.

Goal	Possible Activities	Possible Measures of Success
We connect the community with current technology.	o Computer classes o One-on-one computer help o Keep Public access computers up to date o Expand the WiFi hotspot collection	o Number of computer sessions o Number of computer classes and attendees o Number of one-on-one sessions o Post-class or session satisfaction survey
We make accessing resources easy.	o Review of website navigation o Journey mapping to improve signage in the library o Survey of patrons about ease of access o Online database promotion	o Website statistics o Patron satisfaction survey (in next community survey) o Online database statistics
We promote literacy and the joy of reading.	o Early literacy programs o Book Clubs o Book displays	o Number of programs and attendees o Circulation statistics o Social media statistics

Community Engagement

We value community connections between people and the library.

The library desires to be the hub of the community, connecting people to the library and to each other. This means thinking strategically about communication and how to best reach people to increase knowledge of all the library offers. In addition, the library wants to maintain their reputation for being welcoming and helping people with any questions they pose. The library wants to have a strong group of partners and be a good partner. This means reviewing current and potential partnerships and looking for ways to be out in the community to raise awareness and interest. Raising interest and awareness can happen online, too, so staff will develop a communications plan to bring together ideas and activities for reaching more people in the community. To gauge success, the library can gather stories from patrons at service desks about their favorite thing about the library or the impact the library has had on their life.

Goal	Possible Activities	Possible Measures of Success
We increase awareness through communication about all aspects of the library.	o Develop a communications plan that includes outreach and social media o Train staff on marketing best practices	o Social media statistics o Awareness of library services (in next community survey) o Number of presentations to community groups
We are a valuable community asset and strong community partner.	o Outreach activities o Pop-up library programs o Develop library partnership list with current/potential partners	o Number of outreach activities and number of people connected at outreach o Number of partnerships o Partner satisfaction survey
We build strong relationships with our patrons and are responsive to their needs.	o Ongoing Customer service training o Promote Reference and Readers Advisory services o Develop new communication methods to make it easy for patrons to give feedback to library staff	o Number of cardholders o Patron satisfaction survey (in next community survey) o Number of reference questions

Next Steps

After this plan is adopted by the Board, staff will complete an activity plan to guide implementation. Implementation will be a continual process, as the timing of certain activities will be determined by priority. We will review and adjust the activity plan on a regular basis.

Evaluation of the plan will be ongoing and strategic. Measurements for each goal will vary, and some activities will be best evaluated by collecting data through patron and community surveys. Other activities will be evaluated based on information collected in-house such as circulation and usage statistics, program participation, and social media data. Continued reporting of successes and challenges will ensure that we are transparent about our progress and open to input.

The library commits to a comprehensive review and update of this plan at its completion. We intend that this plan will move us forward and anticipate using this process as a best practice for maintaining momentum and an institutionalized way of operating. This plan is an investment in the future of the library as a continued asset of the overall community.