



Strategic Plan

July 2016 – June 2021

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Core Values

Our Core Values were developed by library staff. They describe how we do business at the library and how we interact with each other.

COMMUNITY

We are stronger by lifting each other up.

INDIVIDUALITY

We believe every voice matters.

GROWTH

We embrace learning and exploration.

TRANSPARENCY

We communicate openly and respectfully.

INTEGRITY

We pursue excellence through accountability and resourcefulness.

FUN

We are friendly and create joy.

Introduction

Motivation for Planning

A good public library reflects its unique environment. Polk County Public Library is committed to this idea. The last time that the library led a comprehensive community-based planning process was around 2001, prior to a major building campaign. Much has changed since then: the Columbus Library moved into a new space, technology radically altered the way we live, the economy rose and fell, and so much more. It was time to check back in with our communities.

The Strategic Plan will direct how the library manages resources over the next five years. It will provide the framework for responsible decision-making and will guide the library in providing high-quality and relevant library services to the communities of Polk County.

The Planning Process

In June 2015, the Polk County Public Library received a federally-funded Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant to develop a strategic plan for its library system. This provided the resources to implement the planning process outlined in the Public Library Association's publication, *Strategic Planning for Results*, augmented by a Community Needs Assessment Process.

Strategic Planning for Results was selected by the library because it prioritizes the needs of the individual communities being served and because it emphasizes community input and staff involvement. This planning process was specifically designed for small- and medium-sized public libraries and provides a streamlined, community-based approach to planning.

The library's planning process is based on the assumption that excellence must be defined locally and that excellence results when library services match user needs, interests, and priorities. Through interviews and focus groups, community stakeholders were asked to identify the needs of the community served by the library and the ways in which the library can best meet those needs. The process also included a survey of the residents of Polk County, to which a total of 254 individuals responded.

The Polk County Public Library's planning process was facilitated by Dr. Robert Burgin, a library consultant with nearly 40 years of experience in library education, library consulting, and library administration.

Introduction

Key community stakeholders formed a Community Steering Team. This team included:

Barie Baker
Betty Brewer
Jon Cannon
Wanangwa Dever
Liz Easley

Ted Hiley
Cathy Ruth
Alan Smith
Sarah Woods

The consultant provided the Community Steering Team with a Community Needs Assessment, based on demographic data for Polk County, library usage and funding data, and the input gathered through surveys, focus groups, meetings, and interviews. A summary of the Needs Assessment can be found on the following page. The Community Steering Team recommended five primary Service Priorities for the next five years.

A Staff Planning Team, made up of members of the staff of the Polk County Public Library, was also involved in the planning process, and provided input and feedback to the community planning team.

The staff planning team included:

Wanangwa Dever
Rishara Finsel
Kris Graham

Bob McCall
Jen Pace Dickenson

The Staff Planning Team then drafted goals and measurable objectives for each of the service priorities, and these were reviewed and approved by the Community Steering Team. Unless otherwise indicated, the objectives represent targets the Polk County Public Library hope to achieve by the end of the plan.

The final plan is a combination of ideas and effort by the community planning team and the library staff team.

Community Needs Summary

Demographic data for Polk County reflects the fact that the county has a much older population, a more highly educated population, and a higher degree of economic wellbeing than does the rest of the state. Demographic trends show that Polk County has experienced a much faster decrease in younger individuals, a drop in the minority population, slower growth in college-educated individuals, relatively slower population growth, and a more rapid growth in measures of economic wellbeing.

Library data shows that Polk County Public Library is providing a very high level of library service and is one of the best county libraries in the state, ranking among the top 25 per cent of county libraries in the state in all but three of the measures examined. Over the past ten years, usage and funding for the Polk County Public Library have grown faster than the average county library in the state in most areas. On the other hand, there is some evidence that the library's staff size is inadequate, given the level of service provided by the library. A recent statewide library technology assessment found that the Polk County Library lags behind the state average on all three major areas and exceeds the state average on just two of the eleven benchmarks that make up those three areas.

A survey of county residents found that respondents most frequently used the library for adult books, checking out videos and DVDs, books for children, and free Wi-Fi. When asked how the library's services, resources, facilities, and customer service could be improved, most respondents mentioned more space for teens, facilities, books, and better customer service. When asked what they wanted for their communities, respondents listed meeting spaces, improvements in literacy, and a welcoming environment. Respondents rated books for adults, checking out videos and DVDs, and books for children as the most important library resources and services. Fewer than half of the respondents felt that some factor limited their use of the library, and the most frequently identified limits to library use included having computer and Internet access at work or at home and inconvenient library hours.

A survey of library staff found that a large number of staff regarded the library's ability to meet the needs of its customers as very good. Staff identified the library's strengths as the staff, children's and teen programs, and the facilities. Staff saw staff-related issues, internal processes, and programs for adults as opportunities for improvement. Staff listed the top priorities for the library in the future as customer service, staff development, programs for adults, and collections. Staff saw the most important library services as books for adults, books for children, books for young adults, and checking out videos and DVDs.

Focus groups, interviews with community leaders, and other meetings found strong support for programs for adults and seniors; books and collections; children's services; facilities; partnerships and outreach; staff; students, teens, and young adults; and technology.

Polk County Public Library
PLAN OF
SERVICE
2016 - 2021

Library Priorities

Polk County Public Library builds opportunities to:

Explore and Know Our Community

Adults in Polk County will be able to make meaningful connections to resources and services in the community.

People of all ages will have opportunities to build and strengthen connections with each other in order to foster community engagement.

Visit a Comfortable Place

Library visitors will have access to spaces that support a multitude of uses, from social interaction to sitting quietly and reading.

Teens in Polk County will have inviting places to gather and interact.

Connect with Technology

Polk County residents will have access to current technology and the support to learn how to use it.

Spark and Satisfy Curiosity

Residents of Polk County will have resources and activities that encourage exploration of new ideas and personal interests.

Create a Bright Future

School aged children and teens will have resources to support them in becoming engaged, literate community members.

Young children in Polk County will have the skills and knowledge to prepare them to enter school ready to learn.

Explore and Know Our Community

1.1 Adults in Polk County will be able to make meaningful connections to resources and services in the community.

- 1.1.1 Each year, the library will form two new ongoing organizational partnerships relating to community needs and/or interests.
- 1.1.2 The library will meet with 12 or more community groups annually to share information about library services and to provide suggested resources relevant to each group.
- 1.1.3 Within the first three years of the plan, library staff will launch and maintain an online community events calendar.
- 1.1.4 Within the first three years of the plan, library staff will develop a means for gathering and communicating information regarding community resources.
- 1.1.5 Over 90% of adult users surveyed will indicate that the information provided by staff about community resources is very good or excellent.

Representative Activities:

- Participate in community festivals, parades and events
- Cultivate relationships with businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, schools, etc.
- Join Carolina Foothills Chamber of Commerce

1.2 People of all ages will have opportunities to build and strengthen connections with each other in order to foster community engagement.

- 1.2.1 Over 75% of adult program attendees surveyed will report they made a personal connection while attending a library function.
- 1.2.2 The library will offer 12 programs annually that provide opportunities for community members to share their ideas or individual points of view.

Representative Activities:

- Co-host programs in unexpected locations throughout the community
- Invite local experts to lead programs about their passions
- Provide space for local musicians and artists to showcase their talent
- Present programs that encourage friendly competition

Visit a Comfortable Place

2.1 Library visitors will have access to spaces that support a multitude of uses, from social interaction to sitting quietly and reading.

- 2.1.1 Visits to the libraries will exceed 100,000 annually.
- 2.1.2 Over 10,000 customers will have an active library card.
- 2.1.3 Reservations of library community rooms by outside groups will increase to 500.
- 2.1.4 Over 90% of library visitors surveyed will indicate that the library is safe, comfortable and welcoming.
- 2.1.5 Within the first three years of the plan, the library will begin implementation of a plan to provide improved user-friendly and adaptable spaces at the Saluda Branch.
- 2.1.6 The library will complete a facilities needs assessment for all county library facilities focused on usability, multi-use spaces and user zones.

Representative Activities:

- Marketing to new customers
- Provide convenient hours of service
- Create zones within libraries for quiet and active library use
- Partner with Polk County Schools to offer library access to all students

2.2 Teens in Polk County will have inviting places to gather and interact.

- 2.2.1 There will be dedicated spaces for teens in both the Columbus and Saluda Libraries.
- 2.2.2 The library will partner with community groups and organizations to provide opportunities for teen activities in locations outside of the libraries at least once quarterly.

Representative Activities:

- Provide teen spaces with appealing furniture, display spaces, and interactive elements
- Identify and connect with community organizations that provide services for teens

Connect with Technology

3.1 Polk County residents will have access to current technology and the support to learn how to use it.

- 3.1.1 The number of public internet sessions will increase by 10%.
- 3.1.2 The library will provide technology programs or services once a month in unincorporated county areas.
- 3.1.3 Over 500 people will participate in technology instruction annually.

Representative Activities:

- Provide personal technology assistance through a Book-a-Tech program
- Offer computer instruction programs at retirement homes and senior centers
- Circulate pre-loaded e-readers through the library's outreach programs
- Increase bandwidth and improve wireless infrastructure in the libraries

Spark and Satisfy Curiosity

4.1 Residents of Polk County will have resources and activities that encourage exploration of new ideas and personal interests.

- 4.1.1 Circulation of nonfiction materials for adults will increase by 15%.
- 4.1.2 The libraries will offer at least 12 limited-time, interactive, self-directed activities at each library annually.
- 4.1.3 Over 500 adults a year will participate in hands-on creative programs that can result in tangible finished projects.
- 4.1.4 Over 20% of adult library customers surveyed will report they learned a new skill as the result of attending a library program or using library materials.
- 4.1.5 Within the first three years of the plan, the library will expand access to materials supporting a wide variety of interests by joining NC Cardinal.

Representative Activities:

- Offer hands-on interactive activities like collaborative art projects or games
- Develop nontraditional circulating collections such as knitting needles or sporting goods
- Develop and merchandize nonfiction collections to encourage browsing and exploration

Create a Bright Future

5.1 School aged children and teens will have resources to support them in becoming engaged, literate community members.

- 5.1.1 Attendance of teens at programs that encourage social interaction or involve hands on activity will increase by 25%.
- 5.1.2 Attendance of youth in grades K-5 at programs that encourage social interaction or involve hands on activity will increase by 25%.
- 5.1.3 The number of youth in grades K-12 registering for the summer reading program will increase by 50%.
- 5.1.4 All library locations will provide teens with dedicated computers that contain software or resources for developing life skills.

Representative Activities:

- Offer a reading program that encourages children to read throughout the summer
- Present maker-oriented programs for teens and children
- Host middle and high school lunchtime book clubs

5.2 Young children in Polk County will have the skills and knowledge to prepare them to enter school ready to learn.

- 5.2.1 Over 16,000 easy readers, picture books, and board books will circulate annually.
- 5.2.2 Attendance at early literacy programs in the library will increase by 25%.
- 5.2.3 The library will offer programs for young children outside of the library at a minimum of 10 different locations annually.
- 5.2.4 Over 90% of parents and caregivers surveyed will indicate that library services for young children are very good or excellent.

Representative activities:

- Offer early literacy training for parents at local childcare facilities
- Provide Baby Bookworms, preschool storytimes and other early literacy programs
- Develop and merchandize book collections for young children
- Provide services to help children and their parents or caregivers identify titles and authors they will enjoy

Organizational Competencies

Organizational Competencies address the Library's infrastructure and operations. They describe conditions the library must achieve or enhance in order to deliver effective services.

Organizational competencies will help the Library achieve the goals stated in the Plan of Service. While the Plan of Service describes direct benefits to community residents, Organizational Competencies provide indirect benefit to community residents by improving the Library's effectiveness and efficiency.

The following Organizational Competencies plan is for a three-year period, ending June 30, 2019. Upon its completion, library staff will reevaluate infrastructure and operations to determine priorities necessary to fulfill the remainder of the Plan of Service.

- 1 MARKETING: Polk County Public Library will promote library services through a variety of print, electronic, media, and in-person opportunities**
 - 1.1 Develop and implement a marketing plan.
 - 1.2 Develop and implement consistent language for describing library locations.
 - 1.3 Provide advocacy training for staff, Library Board members, and members of the Friends of the Library.

- 2 PARTNERSHIPS: Polk County Public Library will actively seek partnerships with organizations and institutions to enable the Library to better serve its customers and achieve its service goals.**
 - 2.1 Identify existing and potential partnerships
 - 2.2 Develop criteria to assess partnership opportunities.
 - 2.3 Develop a method of documenting partnership agreements and expectations.

- 3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT: All Polk County Public Library staff will have ongoing opportunities to acquire knowledge and develop skills that support the provision of excellent library service.**
 - 3.1 Develop a plan for recognition of individual and team success.
 - 3.2 Create and implement a comprehensive staff development plan.
 - 3.3 Create a staff handbook or staff wiki to document library processes

Organizational Competencies

- 4 SPACES: Polk County Public Library will maximize the potential of its spaces to create engaging, user-friendly environments and effective work areas.**
 - 4.1 Update the library's interlocal agreement with the Town of Saluda
 - 4.2 Develop a plan for creating teen spaces and secure funding for implementation.
 - 4.3 Develop a plan to provide improved user-friendly and adaptable spaces at the Saluda Branch.
 - 4.4 Reconfigure staff workspaces at Columbus to promote more effective use.
 - 4.5 Reconfigure staff workspaces at Saluda to promote more effective use.
 - 4.6 Increase options for customer self-service.

- 5 COLLECTIONS: Polk County Public Library will creatively manage collection resources to encourage customer exploration and increase usage.**
 - 5.1 Develop merchandising guidelines and provide staff training.
 - 5.2 Allocate collection space based on usage, budget, and library goals.
 - 5.3 Allocate collection budget based on usage, overall funding, and library goals

- 6 NC CARDINAL: Polk County Public Library will join NC Cardinal, and will update training, processes and collections to support the transition.**
 - 6.1 Cull materials as per Collection Development Policy, in preparation for NC Cardinal transition.
 - 6.2 Re-barcode library collection to be compatible with NC Cardinal.
 - 6.3 Implement an NC Cardinal-compatible library card initiative to recruit new customers and update existing cards.
 - 6.4 Join and begin participation in NC Cardinal.
 - 6.5 Provide NC Cardinal training for staff and customers.

Organizational Competencies

- 7 TECHNOLOGY: Polk County Public Library will provide effective, up-to-date networks and equipment to support customer and staff use.**
 - 7.1 Update technology policies.
 - 7.2 Upgrade network infrastructure to support improved internet access at both libraries.
 - 7.3 Replace public computers to improve ease of management and improve the customer experience.

- 8 STAFFING: Polk County Public Library will have the resources necessary to be a desirable employer.**
 - 8.1 Conduct assessment of staffing needs and organizational structure.
 - 8.2 Update staff job descriptions.
 - 8.3 Assess staff paycales and advocate for competitive salaries.

- 9 DATA REPORTING: Polk County Public Library will be transparent in documenting services and measuring progress.**
 - 9.1 Implement an accurate system for counting customer visits to the Saluda Library.
 - 9.2 Update how the library collects statistics to support the Strategic Plan.
 - 9.3 Update how the library reports statistics to the Library Board.
 - 9.4 Train staff on outcomes assessment and begin using as a way to measure success

Organizational Competencies

Implementation Timeline	2016		2017				2018				2019	
	Jul	Oct	Jan	Apr	Jul	Oct	Jan	Apr	Jul	Oct	Jan	Apr
1.1 Marketing Plan												
1.2 Consistent location language												
1.3 Advocacy training												
2.1 Identify partnerships												
2.2 Partnerships assessment												
2.3 Partnership agreements												
3.1 Staff recognition												
3.2 Staff development plan												
3.3 Document library processes												
4.1 Update Saluda agreement												
4.2 Teen space plan and funding												
4.3 Saluda space plan												
4.4 Columbus workspaces												
4.5 Saluda workspaces												
4.6 Customer self-service												
5.1 Merchandising guidelines												
5.2 Allocate collection space												
5.3 Allocate collection budget												
6.1 Cull materials												
6.2 Re-barcode materials												
6.3 Library card initiative												
6.4 Join NC Cardinal												
6.5 NC Cardinal training												
7.1 Technology policies												
7.2 Update networks												
7.3 Replace public computers												
8.1 Staff needs assessment												
8.2 Update job descriptions												
8.3 Pay study												
9.1 Saluda customer counts												
9.2 Data collection												
9.3 Data reporting												
9.4 Outcomes assessment												