



Create Connections • Ignite Imaginations

Strategic Plan

July 2021 – June 2026

Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Introduction	4
Motivation for Planning	4
The Planning Process	4
Community Needs Survey	5
Vision, Mission, and Values	6
Library Priorities	7
GOAL 1: Empowering Technology	8
GOAL 2: Enriching User Experiences	8
GOAL 3: Vibrant, Welcoming, and Versatile Library Spaces	9
GOAL 4: Equitable Services	9

Acknowledgments

Polk County Public Libraries wish to thank the following for their support during the planning process:

Strategic Performance Systems, LLC and Dr. Anthony Chow for leading the needs assessment and strategic planning process.

Community members of the Polk County Public Libraries Steering Committee:

Diana Blanton
Chrelle Booker
Jon Cannon
Dr. Warren Carson

Karen Marshall
MaryAnn Sloan
Gillian Westmore

Polk County leadership, library staff, community members, and patrons who participated in our year-long study.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), and the State Library of North Carolina for funding this project.

Introduction

Motivation for Planning

Polk County Public Libraries (PCPL) are committed to reflecting our unique communities through the services we provide. To ensure the libraries remain relevant and essential to the communities of Polk County, we revisit and realign our priorities every five years to create a new strategic plan that will provide a roadmap for goals and decision making.

The Planning Process

In June of 2020, Polk County Public Libraries received a planning grant made possible by funding from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) as administered by the State Library of North Carolina. Funds from the grant helped cover the cost of hiring a strategic planning consultant to guide the libraries through the planning process and conduct the community needs report.

A steering committee of 13 community members from different backgrounds and perspectives helped create a strategic plan that included the entire Polk County community.

The community needs assessment took place over a six-month period from August 2020 to January 2021. During the assessment period, nine interviews and four focus groups were conducted along with two surveys. A total of 687 survey responses were received and recorded. In addition, ten years of performance data was analyzed from 2011-2020 and PCPL's 2020 statistics were compared to the averages of all other North Carolina county libraries.

From January to March 2021, library staff and the steering committee shaped a strategic plan that addresses community needs and wants identified in the assessment. Through drafting sessions and an all-day strategic planning retreat, staff and steering committee members created goals designed to best position the libraries to support Polk County.

Community Needs Survey

Library data shows that Polk County Public Libraries are a strong library system and continued to increase in library visits and circulation over the past ten years (excluding 2020 due to the pandemic). Program attendance also increased over the past ten years with a boom in attendance of virtual programming in 2020. Similar to national and statewide trends, print book circulation for adults has decreased and electronic usage has increased exponentially. Print book circulation, however, is still much more popular with a 5.6 to 1 ratio with e-book usage.

PCPL also compared favorably to the state's other county systems in 2020. It is well funded, cost effective, and used more frequently per capita than the state average. The use of GIS maps suggest that the northern and eastern part of the counties may be underserved because a high percentage of those areas are further than 7 miles away or a 20-25+ minute drive to a library location. The maps show these areas have higher concentrations of children 0-9, those in poverty, percentage of minorities, those without an Internet subscription, and those who are 65+.

A survey of county residents found that the top three most popular activities are outside activities, travel, and leisure reading followed by streaming movies/TV, and hobbies and crafts. The leading topics of interest were health, wellness, and healthy aging as well as education and lifelong learning. In terms of physical space, the community would like an accessible, quiet space to work, study, and read. Respondents also desired a space to meet with friends and small groups, as well as a place for hands-on interactive experiences and teen-friendly spaces. The clear top four preferred information sources were websites, books, television, and radio. The community feels that its greatest needs over the next 3-5 years are increased community programs and spaces, access to the Internet and technology, a focus on education and information literacy, and health and wellness initiatives.

PCPL staff responses show a high level of satisfaction. Staff identified strengths as customer service, collection selection, and programming. Staff saw room for improvement in updating facilities and adding interactive experiences, shifting toward becoming a community center, increased staff training, improved marketing and outreach, increasing focus on children and teens, increasing programming for all ages, and equalizing access to all within the community.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision Statement (What We Aspire to Be)

Create Connections. Ignite Imaginations.

Mission Statement (What We Commit To)

We enrich lives, encourage ideas, and celebrate community.

Core Values (What We Are)

Respectful

We are considerate and treat everyone with dignity.

Curious

We explore and encourage learning in all forms.

Adaptable

We support each other as library and community needs change.

Enthusiastic

We bring energy and passion to all we do.

Equitable

We serve our community with open and equal access.

Library Priorities

Core Competencies (How We Thrive)

-  Meaningful Learning Experiences
-  Active Community Engagement
-  Excellent Customer Service
-  Quality Collections
-  Engaging Community Spaces
-  Robust Technology

High Priority Goals (What we do)

Empowering Technology

Provide a robust infrastructure and innovative technologies that meet the needs of our community.

Enriching User Experiences

Instill a love of learning through multifaceted collections and innovative activities. We encourage the sharing of broad ideas and experiences.

Vibrant, Welcoming, and Versatile Library Spaces

Create invigorating spaces that engage visitors and build community within our libraries.

Equitable Services

Increase services and expand access to all users, especially beyond the walls of our buildings.

GOAL 1: Empowering Technology

Provide a robust infrastructure and innovative technologies that meet the needs of our community.

1. Create and maintain a robust technology infrastructure (ongoing)
2. Provide technology instruction (ongoing)
3. Support local county government initiatives to improve broadband access (ongoing)
4. Provide portable technology for library programs and events (by 2023)
5. Pursue community interest and cost of circulating technology devices (by 2025)

GOAL 2: Enriching User Experiences

Instill a love of learning through multifaceted collections and innovative activities. We encourage the sharing of broad ideas and experiences.

1. Encourage civic engagement (ongoing)
2. Prioritize purchasing and processing materials according to user needs (ongoing)
3. Quarterly, the libraries will offer cultural programming for adults to cultivate an appreciation for diverse perspectives (by 2023; ongoing)
4. Support community health and wellness (by 2023)
5. Display local art and other exhibits at both locations (by 2024)
6. Provide high-touch children's learning opportunities at both locations (by 2024)
7. Expand non-traditional library materials collection (by 2024)

GOAL 3: Vibrant, Welcoming, and Versatile Library Spaces

Create invigorating spaces that engage visitors and build community within our libraries.

1. Renovate Columbus Library children's area to be more inviting, educational, and entertaining (by summer 2022)
2. Utilize and maintain outdoor spaces at Columbus Library including the deck, butterfly garden, and children's patio (by winter 2023)
3. Renovate upstairs of Columbus Library (by summer 2024)
4. Add Columbus Library Makerspace (by fall 2024)
5. Dedicate a teen space at Columbus Library (by fall 2025)
6. Create more study rooms and meeting spaces (by summer 2026)

GOAL 4: Equitable Services

Increase services and expand access to all users, especially beyond the walls of our buildings.

1. Market library services to specifically target underserved groups (ongoing)
2. Connect with our community outside of library locations (ongoing)
3. Expand and personalize customer service (ongoing)
4. Expand homebound delivery services (by 2023)
5. Provide remote pickup options in rural areas (by 2024)