

Portage County Public Library

Strategic Plan 2022-2024



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Adopted 12/1/2021

Portage County Public Library Strategic Plan: 2022-2024

Summary	3
Mission, Vision, Values, and Strengths	4
Our Mission	4
Our Vision	4
Our Values	4
Our Strengths.....	4
Goals, Actions, and Desired Outcomes	5
Goal 1: Community Hub - The Library will collaborate with community partners to help people find services and to support creative endeavors.....	5
Goal 2: Library Environment - The Library environment will be safe, welcoming and suited to meet the needs of library users at each branch location.....	6
Goal 3: Outreach - The Library will strengthen outreach & marketing efforts to the community to build support and increase awareness of its services.	7
Goal 4: Service to an Active Community - The Library will be indispensable to our community by meeting its diverse needs through programming, collections and services.	8
Appendix A: Portage County Public Library Staff Expectations	9

This plan was formulated with input from the staff and board of the Portage County Public Library.

Summary

When the Portage County Public Library (PCPL) unveiled its strategic plan for 2019-2021, it had no idea that during most of that time period the area would be grappling with the effects of a two-year worldwide pandemic. It was a health situation that put aside many of the traditional methods of operating a library. The library shut down public access to its buildings in March 2020, before reopening on a limited basis later that summer. Meeting rooms were reopened to the public in October 2021. All programming went virtual in spring of 2020 and most remain that way at the end of 2021. Through it all, library leadership and staff learned a lot about what could be achieved in an emergency. With the installation of safety measures such as protective screens, HVAC improvements and additional cleaning, PCPL remained vital to the community by providing services such as computers, curbside pickup of library materials, and the aforementioned virtual programming for adults and children.

While some early work on the prior plan goals was made during 2019, significant progress was difficult to achieve due to conditions that restricted public contact & staff meetings. In addition, the time and energy required for staff to adapt to the new conditions also overrode work on most of the specific actions in the plan. As a consequence, PCPL will carry over the same four goals into the 2022-2024 strategic plan and update the actions to reflect any new needs and opportunities identified during the pandemic.

At the start of the planning effort for 2019-2021 strategic plan, the Portage County Public Library invited residents to imagine and express their hopes for Portage County communities. Listed below are several of the themes observed among the key community vision ideas that people shared:

- lifelong learning for personal and professional growth
- access to and awareness of opportunities, services and supports
- opportunities for self-expression
- experience of an inclusive community
- celebration of community members' heritage, culture, and history

The Portage County Public Library aims to support the community in realizing these and other relevant community vision ideas. Accordingly, this plan identifies Portage County Public Library's four strategic goals for the next three years, through 2024.

- **Goal 1: Community Hub**
The Library will collaborate with community partners to help people find services and to support their endeavors.
- **Goal 2: Library Environment**
The Library environment will be safe, welcoming and suited to meet the needs of library users at each branch location.
- **Goal 3: Outreach**
The Library will strengthen outreach & marketing efforts to the community to build support and increase awareness of its services.

- **Goal 4: Service to an Active Community**

The Library will be indispensable to our community by meeting its diverse needs through programming, collections and services.

Mission, Vision, Values, and Strengths

Our Mission

We enrich our community by connecting people and offering free and equal opportunity for lifelong learning and enjoyment.

Our Vision

We inspire people of all ages with the love of reading, foster lifelong learning, and enhance quality of life. The library connects the community, offers gathering spaces, and inspires creativity and innovation in a welcoming and respectful atmosphere. The library provides access to high-quality materials, resources, programs and customer-focused experiences.

Our Values

- **Accessibility**
- **Inclusiveness**
- **Respect**
- **Trust**
- **Innovation**

Our Strengths

- Accessibility of materials, resources, programs, and experiences that the four branches have to offer.
- Spaces for library users to comfortably meet, study, stay warm, keep cool, get online and recharge.
- Variety of programs for youth and for adults.
- Collections that include a variety of items including books, digital media, games and databases.
- Staff composed of dedicated and versatile professionals who communicate and work as a team to serve library users.
- Supportive patron base, and a good reputation in the community.

“A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert.” — Andrew Carnegie

Goals, Actions, and Desired Outcomes

Goal 1: Community Hub

The Library will collaborate with community partners to help people find services and to support their endeavors.

Actions	Desired Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Determine current staff member connections with community organizations. B. Build and maintain relationships with community partners. C. Research the need for (and development of) makerspaces and physical or virtual creative spaces (e.g. blog) for library users. D. Provide support for local writers. E. Continue to provide neat, orderly and well-managed spaces for community partners to share their information and resources. F. Where possible, help community partners meet their stated goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Strengthened connection with small businesses and community partners in order to help meet the needs of the community. B. The library and its staff will be equipped to help people find available assistance. C. Newcomers and immigrants get connected to helpful people and service providers. (This outcome also corresponds with goals 2 and 4.) D. People who are marginalized gain access to services. (This outcome also corresponds with goals 2 and 4.) E. Productive collaboration with community groups helps to advance shared goals.

“Library buildings have become a truly neutral place that acts as an anchor of community life and fosters broader, more creative interactions. In these spaces, community groups meet, independent business people work, students collaborate, the curious attend lectures or performances, and people seeking the comfort and energy of being surrounded by others relax, study, or read.”

*~ Wisconsin Library Association’s Library Development & Legislation Committee Co-chairs
Connie Meyer and Kathy Pletcher, 2018*

Goal 2: Library Environment

The Library environment will be safe, welcoming and suited to meet the needs of library users at each branch location.

Actions	Desired Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Keep annual facilities plans up-to-date. Keep responsible stakeholders engaged. Host annual walkthroughs. B. Keep facilities clean, organized, functional and in good condition, modern, and appealing. C. Pursue customer service and safety training. Interested staff may participate in safe zone training. D. Redefine and re-configure service desks to accommodate use of self-checkout stations, and to make it easier for users to find their way. E. Improve meeting room usability for on-site and remote users. F. Create new unified signage that helps point to all areas from all major decision points. This should be multilingual signage including braille for hand/eye level signs. G. Work with UWSP social work student interns on library property to address social issues. H. Keep the "Rules of Use," for meeting rooms and library in general, up-to-date and advertise it to the public. I. Work with partners to ensure the library meets the needs of users with various types of disabilities. J. Survey patrons to determine what would improve the library experience for them. K. For staff interested in the library as a career, provide continuing education opportunities and guidance to build on service to the community and increase their knowledge. L. Hire more staff that know non-English languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Facilities are clean, functional, and modern. B. Buildings and amenities support activities that may occur at the library. Library environments encourage library use and community partnerships. C. Signage helps users find their way easily. D. User experiences are favorable. E. People feel that they belong. F. The future of library facilities is secure. G. Stable staffing with increased knowledge and ability. <p>Note: Outcomes 1.C and 1.D also relate to this goal.</p>

*"The only thing that you absolutely have to know, is the location of the library."
~ Albert Einstein*

Goal 3: Outreach

The Library will strengthen outreach & marketing efforts to the community to build support and increase awareness of its services.

Actions	Desired Outcomes
<p>A. Discover new ways to reach potential library users.</p> <p>B. Reach out and encourage families to use the library from birth, as well as community members of all other ages and stages of life.</p> <p>C. Ask community partners to promote the library and spread information about what it offers. This will increase our reach into the community.</p> <p>D. Increase our visibility and participation in the community.</p> <p>E. Review, revise, and implement the marketing plan and pursue branding strategies therein.</p> <p>F. Rethink how programs are promoted and advertised to enhance the perception of the library as an educational and impactful community institution. Correlate program outcomes to learning targets and stated goals. Gather testimonials and quotes about the value of the library for use in ads and reports.</p> <p>G. Advertise and promote new offerings as they become available.</p> <p>H. Create a social media procedure and have more staff regularly promote the library through those outlets. Encourage more people to use the library's Facebook page. Keep telling them what makes the library so great, and generate posts that engage users.</p>	<p>A. Expanded library use among current and new audiences.</p> <p>B. Greater awareness and appreciation for all types of library resources and programs.</p> <p>C. Clarify that library resources, programs, and services support people in their personal, professional and civic pursuits.</p> <p>D. The library reflects and celebrates the diversity of the community.</p> <p>E. The library supports lifelong learning with popular resources and programs for people of all ages.</p> <p>F. It is clear to supporters that resources, programs, and services help to advance shared community goals.</p>

“The public library is more than a repository of books. It’s a mysterious, wondrous place with the power to change lives.”

~ Chicago Tribune literary editor Elizabeth Taylor

Goal 4: Service to an Active Community

The Library will be indispensable to our community by meeting its diverse needs through programming, collections and services.

Actions	Desired Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Pursue more community interaction, collaboration, and research to determine what types of new programs and services are needed. B. Enhance and promote library programs that may bolster other important literacy programs. C. Define collection goals in light of community programming and service needs. Review and update policy on collection goals. D. Stay abreast of current issues, opportunities, and emerging technologies to help advance service priorities and expand access. E. Develop and practice a procedure to review policies annually and make any needed changes. F. Rethink staffing needs and staff training in order to support more programming. G. Develop a well-trained and responsive staff. H. Cultivate staff knowledge of literature, music, and film to improve Readers Advisory service. I. Analyze services and opportunities that emerged in response to COVID that should continue post-COVID. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Success in advancing several library service priorities: Lifelong learning, Cultural awareness, Create & share content, Services for new immigrants, and Early literacy. B. Support for all age ranges reflected in community. C. Equal support for people of all backgrounds. D. Library collections, programs and services reflect and support a diverse community. E. Programs relate to underserved audiences, local interests, and local history; and they promote cultural awareness. F. Residents in rural areas have more ways to access library materials more easily. G. The library maintains collections that people use, need, and want. H. Library employees are aware of expectations as public servants. (see Attached Expectations) I. Library more fully fulfills user needs for both in-depth assistance and convenient services.

“Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation.”
 ~ Walter Cronkite, Network News Anchor

Appendix A: Portage County Public Library Staff Expectations

PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

PORTAGE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

I recognize that I am employed because of the public

I will listen to patrons completely and try my best to accurately understand their needs

I will keep in mind that the *way* I say something to patrons is often equally as important as *what* I say.

I will recognize that every action I take has a positive or negative influence.

I will keep venting to a minimum and remain professional and respectful of those around me when voicing displeasure.

I will remain objective and avoid personal judgment.

I will take the time to assist and inform patrons to the best of my abilities, within accepted library policies and procedures.

I will be supportive and respectful of my co-workers and will respond to their needs in the same manner as I would a patron.

I understand that every member of the Library team impacts the perception of the Library as a whole. As a Library representative I will strive to encourage a positive perception of the organization.