

STRATEGIC PLANS MATTER FOR LIBRARIES

Libraries can't be thanked enough for their relentless contributions to our social fabric. However, with a rapidly changing technical, educational, and political landscape, they must also juggle numerous competing priorities. Strategic plans empower library leaders to focus their limited resources on the priorities that will have the greatest impact.

Strategy is a clear roadmap that consists of a set of guiding principles to prioritize goals and define the actions people in an organization should (and should not) take to achieve the desired results.

So, why should libraries start strategic planning? Here are some outcomes that libraries can expect from implementing a strong strategic plan.

1. Establishes a Common Shared Vision and Plan

Aligning the library administration, staff, board, and community leaders to a common vision and plan enhances the organizational focus of these influential stakeholder groups. Strategic plans serve as effective communication tools during operational reviews to ensure that everybody is on the same page when it comes to pursuing goals that align with the library's mission, vision, and values. With a well-planned strategy in place, staff members can better discern which actions align with the selected route as they take action to achieve various goals.

2. Engages the Community in the Library's Vision

The active involvement of the community in any planning process helps validate the plan, leading to increased support from policymakers while quieting skeptics. Strategic planning typically involves some combination of community surveys and focus groups. These forums surface a wide range and diverse set of viewpoints that can be addressed in a balanced plan.

Involving the community in this way helps them understand the library's purpose and fosters openness to changes that align with the library's mission and vision.

Strategy:

- 1) a clear roadmap, consisting of a set of guiding principles or rules, that defines the actions people in the organization should take (and not take) and the things they should prioritize to achieve the desired results.
- 2) a series of actions, when taken together, have a greater impact than the sum of the individual actions.
- 3) is not being '*all things to all people.*'

"Having a strong strategic plan helps focus the work of an ambitious team."

- Library Director
Rochester Hill Public Library

3. Defines Measures of Success

KPIs, also known as Key Performance Indicators, provide quantifiable outcomes that paint a clear picture of what success looks like and bring objectivity to strategic conversations. Libraries can effectively communicate their impact on the community by sharing these KPIs with the community itself and civic leaders. Metrics such as circulation, door counts, program attendance, and offsite community contracts are popular examples of library KPIs.

4. Supports Fundraising and Validates Funding Requests

Library *Friends* depend on maintaining the engagement of their contributors, fostering a strong connection between them and the library's impact on the community. Donors are likely to be more generous with their giving when they know they are supporting a broader, or even bolder, vision for their library.

The breadth of services a library can provide largely depends on the allocated budget. Government leaders are swamped with competing spending requests. By implementing a well-conceived and effectively communicated strategic plan, the library can effectively showcase the positive outcomes and ease the political burden associated with supporting the library's future.

Conclusion

A strong strategic plan plays a vital role in sharpening the focus of an ambitious team, disseminating the vision to external stakeholders, and guiding the organization toward efficient operations.

Bâton Global assists and supports all types of organizations with their innovation, leadership, research, and strategy. Let Bâton Global help you design a strategy that achieves your library's goals.



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