



LIBRARIES

The Des Moines Public Library and the West Des Moines Public Library are two highly regarded library systems, serving a population of nearly 500,000 through seven combined locations. Des Moines Public Library is Iowa's largest library system. Together with the West Des Moines Public Library, the libraries serve the fastest growing metro in the upper Midwest.

CHALLENGES

Traditional strategic plans can be long, rigid and can quickly become obsolete. These libraries desired dynamic and agile strategic plans to articulate an agreed upon direction to serve their respective communities for the next 3-5 years. The plans needed to be simpler and clearer than past iterations to facilitate decision-making and communications with their boards and governing bodies.

INTERVENTION

Using a data-driven approach, Bâton Global collected insights from the library staff, board members, local leaders, library partners, foundations, and community members. Care was taken to get feedback from non-users to heavy users.

Equipped with community data, B|G facilitated library strategic planning teams in their creation of system-wide plans. Branch and departmental plans were developed to align with the goals of the system-wide plan. Goal owners were engaged throughout the planning process so they had buy-in to the hard work ahead.



STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Des Moines & West Des Moines Public Libraries Strategic Planning Process



Insight

- Key stakeholders from the libraries, their boards, their “friends” foundations, and the community were interviewed to obtain a holistic understanding the library’s current state and community needs.
- Community leaders, particularly from partnering organizations, were surveyed on the best ways to impact the community.
- Community members - including non-users, home bound service users, outreach participants, digital collection audiences, and heavy in-person users - provided their feedback on how the library could better meet their needs.



Innovation

- The Libraries renewed their North Star statements including Mission, Vision, and Values.
- System and unit scorecards with objectives, key performance indicators (KPIs), targets, and initiatives were developed to communicate and monitor the overall strategy.
- A Strategy-on-a-Page (SoaP) was created for both libraries to succinctly summarize the strategy to all stakeholders.



Integration

- The strategies were developed collaboratively with library leadership which fostered understanding and ownership of the ensuing strategy.
- Orientation to the balance scorecards was provided to build broader support and understanding of the new strategy.
- Dolphin tanks (friendly ‘shark-tanks’) were used at the branch and department level to activate the new strategic plan.
- The new strategies were announced to various stakeholder groups via internal channels, social media,, library news, signage, web updates, and press releases.



Impact

- One library recently enjoyed 5 consecutive quarters of active cardholder growth.
- A system-wide partnership initiative roughly doubled the number of cooperative projects with other community organizations.
- A multi-faceted emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) has brought about changes to the libraries’ collections, programming, websites, staff, and the overall culture.
- Multiple medium-sized initiatives were quickly deployed for quick wins such as: an innovation lab, new meeting rooms, homebound books-by-mail, and a Spanish-speaking emphasis across all services.
- A shared vision of the libraries future energized library Friends to make tactical investments knowing the funding was part of a holistic plan.