

Strategic Plan Workbook

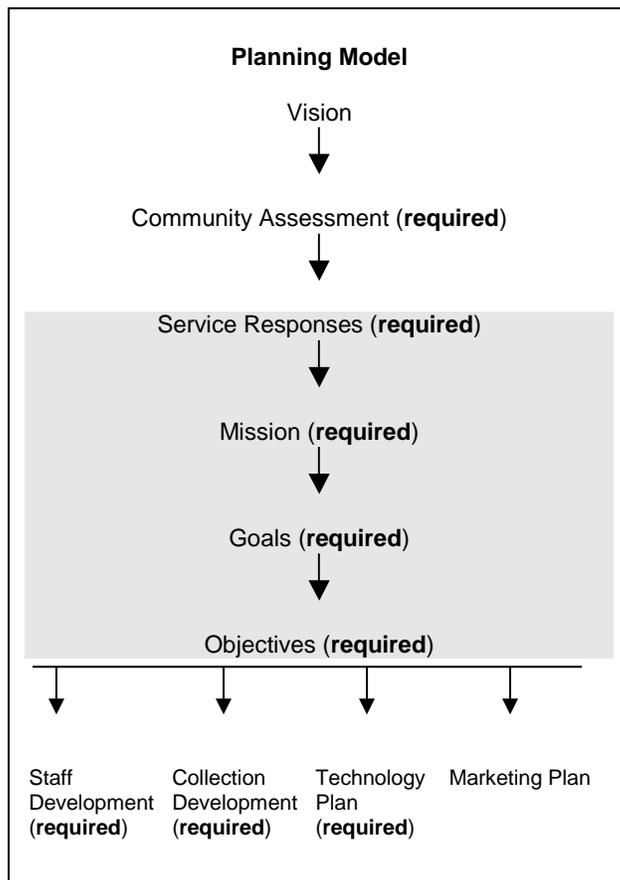
Introduction: Creating Planning Documents

Strategic plans provide libraries with direction and a vision for the future. A well-written plan ensures that programming and services meet the current and future needs of the community in order to secure funding and justify the need for additional library resources. Strategic plans consist of a vision, mission statement, goals, and objectives. The Strategic Plan and Community Assessment inform the direction of additional functional plans including staff development, collection development, technology, and marketing.

The information provided in this workbook will help you create a strategic plan that will give your library and community a working tool to provide services to the community and meet the requirements of the New Mexico Administrative Code 4.5.2. Many of the ideas outlined in the following worksheets were developed by the Public Library Association and published in a book entitled *The New Planning For Results* written by Sandra Nelson. *The New Planning For Results* is a highly recommended method of assessing community needs, garnering community support, and creating planning documents for small and large public libraries. For more information on *The New Planning For Results* visit: <http://www.pla.org/conference/planning/planning.html>.

When engaging in a planning process it is important to involve members of the library board or governing authority. Other committee members will include library staff as well as members of the community such as key stakeholders, people with certain skills, and community representatives.

This workbook will walk your library through the planning process. By following the steps outlined in the workbook you will create all the documentation required for your library to receive funding from the State of New Mexico.



Strategic Plan

Service Responses

(From the Public Library Association's Planning for Results)

A single library cannot provide every service required by the community. Choosing service responses helps focus a library's mission, goals, and activities. When selecting service responses, it is important to base the selection on what the library knows about community need. It is important to involve a variety of people when selecting services responses including: the directory, the board, a community group, and the library staff. Information can be gathered from the community assessment, interviews, surveys, and/or focus groups. The following is a list of library service responses that encompass most library services. Depending on the community size and service needs, between three and seven service responses should be chosen as the basis of the strategic plan.

Basic Literacy:

A library that offers Basic Literacy service addresses the need to read and to perform other essential daily tasks.

Business and Career Information:

A library that offers Business and Career Information service addresses a need for information related to business, careers, work, entrepreneurship, personal finances, and obtaining employment.

Commons:

A library that provides a Commons environment helps address the need of people to meet and interact with others in their community and to participate in public discourse about community issues.

Community Referral:

A library that offers Community Referral addresses the need for information related to services provided by community agencies and organizations.

Consumer Information:

A library that provides Consumer Information service helps to satisfy the need for information to make informed consumer decisions and to help residents become more self-sufficient.

Cultural Awareness:

A library that offers Cultural Awareness service helps satisfy the desire of community residents to gain an understanding of their own cultural heritage and the cultural heritage of others.

Current Topics and Titles:

A library that provides Current Topics and Titles helps to fulfill community residents' appetite for information about popular cultural and social trends and their desire for satisfying recreational experiences.

Formal Learning Support:

A library that offers Formal Learning Support helps students who are enrolled in a formal program of education or who are pursuing their education through a program of home schooling to attain their educational goals.

General Information:

A library that offers General Information helps meet the need for information and answers to questions on a broad array of topics related to work, school, and personal life.

Government Information:

The library that offers Government Information service helps satisfy the need for information about elected officials and government agencies that enables people to participate in the democratic process.

Information Literacy:

A library that provides Information Literacy service helps address the need for skills related to finding, evaluating and using information effectively.

Lifelong Learning:

A library that provides Lifelong Learning service helps address the desire for self-directed personal growth and development opportunities.

Local History and Genealogy:

A library that offers Local History and Genealogy service addresses the desire of community residents to know and better understand personal or community heritage.

Mission

After the library has selected appropriate services responses, it is possible to begin work on the mission statement. If the library does not have a mission statement, or a new mission statement is going to be written, consider writing a draft mission statement with 1-2 staff members. Share the draft with the library board, community, and/or local government and edit it as necessary.

What is it? A mission statement is a brief description of the purpose of the organization or service. It should be no longer than a couple of sentences. A mission statement is general, but it does indicate who the organization serves, what services it provides and why it provides these services. The language should be clear and concise, and the message should be as inspiring as possible. The most important value(s) of the organization should be embodied in the mission statement.

Purpose of the Mission Statement. The mission statement provides a focus for all of the activities that will be included in the plan. It gives members of the organization a brief explanation about their ultimate reason for doing what they do. It helps the members look beyond the routine of work to the purpose of their work. It also gives the plan a starting point to judge all of the elements of the plan. If certain elements have little to do with the mission, then the organization can leave them behind. If they are essential to the mission, then they must become a vital element of the plan.

Drafting your Mission Statement. In writing your mission statement, it is often useful to begin with a sentence that describes why you provide the services that you provide. Then include a sentence or two that describes in as general terms as possible who you serve and the general services that you provide.

Items to Consider in Building a Mission Statement

1. **Why.** Think about the ultimate reason for providing the services that you provide. Begin with the organization's policies, procedures, or activities that are required of the organization by its parent organization or local/state law. What do they tell you about why the organization exists, who it is required to serve, and what services it must provide. What philosophical or ethical belief does this reason imply? Try to write this belief in one sentence.
2. **Who.** List the primary general group to which your library provides services. Then determine whether there are sub-groups that are so important that they should be mentioned separately.
3. **What.** List the general services that you provide. You may start with library services. Some libraries may want to state information services. Think carefully about what each of these words means in terms of services. Within these general categories are there some services that are so important that they define the kind of library you are? If so, they should be listed separately. Think carefully, however, about the implications of putting anything in your mission statement. Do you actually emphasize these services now or is this something to do in the near future? For

example, if you say that your library is an access point to information not held in the library, what kind of services do you provide that show this, and how much emphasis do you place on this when you tell people about the library?

Revisiting your Mission Statement. As you go through the planning process, you may wish to revisit your mission statement periodically. Although the mission statement is general, and therefore may be more stable than other parts of the plan, your conception of the library mission is likely to change. In developing goals for example, you may find that the library's mission may become very different in the future than you envision it to be now. By the end of the process, you will want a mission statement that is not likely to change much over the life of the plan and which can be related to every other element of the plan.

Examples of mission statements can be found on page 8 of this workbook.

Goals, Objectives, Activities, Resources

Once a library mission statement has been crafted it is possible to begin writing the strategic plan's goals and objectives. This part of the strategic plan will specify exactly what will be accomplished. It creates a desired state or goal for an identified service response, lists measures/objectives that will indicate progress toward reaching that goal, list activities to accomplish the goal, and list the required resources necessary to make all this happen.

Goals. Goals are the outcome your community will receive because the library provides programs and services. Goals come directly from the service responses selected for the library and should reflect the community need within each service response.

To formulate the goals, start by identifying the target audience (for example: the residents of NM Town) and then describe the services this audience will receive (will have the resources they need) and the purpose of the service will serve (to meet their recreational needs).

Objectives. Objectives are those specific and time restricted measures, which indicate progress is being made in the implementation of each of the goals of the plan. Indeed that is all they are, just measurements of progress towards a desired state. A planning document is built around the desired state or goal that a library wants to achieve and the activities that it takes to get to that state.

Often the public finds information about the number of people who use a service and how well those people thought the service met their needs to be more compelling than traditional library statistics about circulation and number of questions asked at a reference desk. When developing your objectives you may want to look for measures that show you are going in the direction you intend to go, rather than choosing a strict and rigid number. For example, a traditional objective might be: Circulation will increase by 20%. For the same activity, a more evaluative measurement might be: 80% of patrons will say when surveyed in 2004 that they were able to check out current materials that met their recreational needs.

Planning for Results suggests the measures on which the objectives are built can be identified in three specific ways:

- People served including the total number of users served as well as the number of unique individuals who used the service or program in a given time period.
- How well a given service met the needs of the people being served including the user's opinion about how well the library's service(s) met his or her needs; this opinion could be about the quality of the service, the value of the service, the user's satisfaction with the service, or the impact of the service.
- The number of service units or service transactions that were provided by the library.

There may be 3-6 objectives identified for each goal. The objective statement should include:

- a description of what you are measuring
- a standard to determine success
- a specific period of time within which that change will occur

When developing an objective, the following questions will help:

- Which of the measures is likely to be most meaningful or credible?
- Do any of the measures give us data that is clearly more appropriate to use as measure of progress?
- Do any of the measures use data already collected?
- If data isn't already being collected, can the needed data be collected easily and accurately?

It is important to think carefully about the time frame and responsibility. The time frame should be realistic, but the date should not be so far in the future that conditions are likely to change radically. An example of an objective might be:

During FY __ (the date), at least 40 percent of the preschool children in NM Town (the standard to determine success) will participate in one or more library-sponsored programs (the measure).

Activities

Activities are those necessary actions that will need to happen in order to achieve the goal. You will normally be able to write fairly good activities for the first year or two of your plan. Anything beyond that can be radically altered by changes in the environment. Normally, third year and beyond activities tend to be more general and will change when the plan is evaluated and modified. Even activities that were to occur during the first year or two of the plan may be impossible to implement. This should be reported when the plan is evaluated and modifications of activities should be made. A planning document is not cast in concrete and should be an enabling rather than a proscriptive document.

Resources Required

Any implementation of a planning document requires resources that can include staff, money, time and physical items. Assignment of actions should normally be to positions or groups rather than specific people. Make sure that the assignment makes sense, given the assignee's other duties and interests. You will also need to make sure that the assignee will be able to take on the assignment within the time frame allowed. A plan can both be driven by a budget and drive a budget depending on the library, the community and the opportunities available. You will need to weigh carefully the services responses and goals of the plan against the monetary resources available to the library and the community.

Reviewing and Assessing

The final step in the planning process is to make sure the plans are used and are reviewed on a regular basis. After all this work and planning you want to make sure your plans are accomplished. It is important to build an evaluation process into all plans to ensure the library is following the plan, and/or to make adjustments to the plan as time progresses. It is also important to recognize that while evaluation requires measurement, measurement alone does not constitute evaluation. In order to make review and assessment of the plan a priority:

- include a review statement in the strategic plan that gives a date or a timeframe in which the plan will be reviewed; and
- list the library position or positions responsible for reviewing the document.

One of the advantages of planning is that it sets up criteria by which the progress of the library can be measured. This is relatively simple to measure, since the work on activities is visible. Measures of progress in carrying out objectives are described in the section on writing objectives.

These measures are reviewed on a regular basis by using the gathered data and the activities updated in order to assure that the outcomes are achieved. New activities can be added and ongoing ones redesigned. By doing so the plan becomes an effective management tool. The staff should be involved in the review process. Documenting whether the objectives are being met, the successes and the challenges are reported to the governing authority on a regularly defined basis. By the end of the length of the plan, updating activities will likely no longer be satisfactory in achieving the goals. It will be time to go through the planning process again.

Examples of goals and objectives can be found on page 9 of this workbook.

A template for the strategic plan is located on page 11 of this workbook. An electronic copy of this template is available in Microsoft Word in the Plans & Policies section of the Librarian's Toolkit.

Mission Statement Examples

- The NM Town Public Library is a place for all residents and taxpayers and is dedicated to open and equal access to information; independent learning; the joys of reading; the building of a sense of community; and the promotion of cultural awareness.
- The NM Town Public Library is the learning center of our community and the place for NM Town residents to turn for the discovery of ideas, the joy of reading and the power of information. Community needs drive our services and we take a personal interest in ensuring that they are delivered in a welcoming, convenient and responsive manner.
- The NM Town Public Library provides the community with free, open and equal access to general information on a broad array of topics; resources to promote personal growth and lifelong learning; popular materials to meet cultural and recreational needs; and the training needed to find, evaluate and use information effectively.
- The NM Town Public Library offers opportunities for people of all ages to learn, know, gather, and grow. The library is a dependable source of reliable information and of challenging ideas that enlighten and enrich, and of materials in many formats that enhance leisure time and expand knowledge of current events. The library encourages the love of reading and the joy of learning, and offers the assistance people need to find, evaluate, and use electronic and print resources that help them live successful and rewarding lives.
- The NM Town Public Library will protect intellectual freedom, promote literacy, encourage lifelong learning, and provide library materials and information services. Efficient and dedicated staff will provide effective services and programs. The library will maintain a diverse collection of books and other materials and provide access to materials outside the NM Town Public Library through interlibrary loan.
- The NM Town Public Library is an essential, life-long educational resource for NM Town. It provides access to educational and recreational material from its own collection and through interlibrary loan services. The library provides items of current interest for all, creating a door to knowledge and supporting users of every age with independent study sources.

Goal and Objective Examples

Example 1:

Goal: *Children in NM Town will have ready access to a wide variety of programs and materials to meet their recreational and cultural needs.*

Objective: *Each year, the number of children enrolled in the Summer Reading Program will increase by 10%.*

Activities:

1. *Attend New Mexico State Library Summer Reading workshops*
2. *Review collection and order needed materials*
3. *Prepare and schedule school visits to publicize the program*
4. *Make school visits*

Resources Required:

1. *Staff time*
2. *Books*
3. *Supplies*

Example 2:

Goal: *Children in NM Town will have ready access to a wide variety of programs and materials to meet their recreational and cultural needs.*

Objective: *70% of children will indicate in 2004 that they have increased their reading skills because of the Summer Reading Program*

Activities:

1. *Seek literacy volunteers*
2. *Contact teachers to evaluate needs*
3. *Attend New Mexico State Library Summer Reading workshops*
4. *Review collection and order needed materials*
5. *Prepare and schedule school visits to publicize the program*
6. *Make school visits*

Resources Required:

1. *Literacy volunteers*
2. *Teachers*
3. *Staff time*
4. *Books*
5. *Supplies*

Example 2:

Goal: *Children in NM Town will have ready access to a wide variety of programs and materials to meet their recreational and cultural needs.*

Objective: *The number of Summer Reading programs sponsored by the library will increase from 3 in 2003 to 5 in 2004.*

Activities:

1. *Attend New Mexico State Library Summer Reading workshops*
2. *Prepare and schedule school visits to publicize the program*
3. *Make school visits*
4. *Design program*
5. *Schedule performers*

Resources Required:

1. *Staff time*
2. *Books*
3. *Supplies*
4. *Funding for performers*
5. *Performers*

(Name of Library)

STRATEGIC PLAN

(YEARS COVERED)

Service Responses:

Vision Statement:

Mission Statement:

Goal 1:

Objective 1a.
Objective 1b.
Objective 1c.

Activities:

Resources:

Goal 2:

Objective 2a.
Objective 2b.
Objective 2c.

Activities:

Resources:

(Add additional Goals and Objectives.)

Date of Plan: