

## Trustee Topic 11

Planning for the Library's Future

### Why plan?

- Planning for libraries is a process of envisioning the future of both the community and the library and setting a direction for library movement toward a chosen future vision.
- Planning helps the staff and board understand the situation of their community, set priorities, and establish methods for achieving those priorities.
- The planning document provides a record of the decisions made during that process.
- The document also becomes a guide for decision-making and action by staff and the board.

### Planning Essentials-Getting Started

- What information to gather?
  - What services are currently being offered? How have usage patterns been changing? What is the composition of the collection? What is the age of the collection?
- What statistics to be included?
  - Population size broken down by age, gender, race etc. Large or growing groups to the area or newcomers to the community. Economic factors such as household incomes and sources of payroll. Educational profile.
- Who should be involved?
  - The strategic plan for the library benefits from input from multiple individuals.

### Stakeholders

- Mayor and City Council
- Municipal employees
- Representatives from the school or PTA
- Representatives of active service groups
- Representatives of the religious community
- Current library users
- Those not currently using the library

### How do you gather information?

- The real purpose of consulting all of these community representatives is to find out about them—what they are doing and what is important in their lives and work.
- It is up to the experts to be creative in proposing new services or changes in services to meet emerging needs.
- If you ask someone what the library should be like, they will answer based on their preconceptions about what a library is. Instead, inquire about community needs and then apply library resources to fashion the services to help the community fill those needs.

### How do you gather information?

- One of the simplest but most effective is simply to invite them to the library or a neutral site and talk to them. Find someone who is experienced in conducting focus group interviews.
- Construct one or more groups built around particular interests, such as the needs of children in the community or the needs of TE11-4  
Trustee Essentials: A Handbook for Wisconsin Public Library Trustees immigrants.

## Survey's

- What is the specific question you are trying to answer? What hypothesis are you testing?
- Don't ask questions simply for the sake of asking. If you ask whether the respondent went to college, for example, how will having the information affect your investigation? How will you use the information?
- Will your survey reach the target audience? Surveys done in the library are useless for learning the needs and opinions of nonusers. Current library users do not necessarily represent a cross section of the community. ☹ How will your survey be distributed?
- How will your survey be tabulated?
- Do a pretest. Make sure that your respondents have the same understanding of the questions you do.

## Plan Outline

- Introduction
  - Who are you? What are your library and community like? How did you find this out? Who did you consult? How did you consult? What did you find?
- Mission Statement
  - Which vision of the community are you are trying to support? What is the library's role in supporting that vision? What is the reason the library exists?

## Plan Outline

- Service Responses
  - What are the specific services you will offer and, why?
- Activities
  - Under each service, list the particular activities that will be carried out and what you intend to accomplish. How do these activities relate to the mission of the library?
- Evaluation
  - How will you measure the impact these services are having on the target population? How do you know if you are doing it right? What are your alternatives if you are not?

## Discussion Questions

1. Has your library had a plan before? What did it deal with? When was it done?
2. Who should be involved on the ground floor? Which staff members? Which board members? Who is available with the necessary expertise, including outside volunteers that might be able to help with the plan?
3. What resources does your library system have to assist you with planning?
4. Are there any other plans out there that you might consult (e.g., a comprehensive development plan written for the municipality; a comprehensive plan written for the school system; any plan written by the chamber of commerce)

## Discussion Questions

5. What do you hope to accomplish? What will you do with the plan once it is written?
6. How does your library compare with other libraries in similar communities? Do you meet or exceed recommended state standards?
7. Can your library system obtain samples of other strategic plans for your committee to look at? After examining them, ask, What was good about them? What didn't you like?