

PLANNING

Overview

Planning and improving library service are constants in a world in which current information is necessary to both an informed citizenry and government. Planning for libraries is a process of perceiving the future of both the community and the library and setting a direction for library movement toward that future vision. A formal planning process (strategic plan) ensures that Colorado public libraries provide efficient, cohesive, and effective operational results that meet the community's needs while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Planning requires the continuous process of surveying and analyzing library and societal trends, community needs and current services, using qualitative as well as quantitative measures. Input should be gathered from the community, the Library Governing Authority, and all levels of staff. This feedback should serve as the basis for the vision and mission of the library. Surveys should be timely, have consistent language, and distinguish between community needs vs. impact and user surveys vs. community surveys. The library's vision and mission guide the development of goals and objectives for the library. These goals need to be communicated to the community. Appropriate time and necessary funds should be allocated for the planning process in the library's budget. Success is defined in your plan and locally determined by community feedback.

Planning provides an opportunity for organizations to work together. There are several methods to use when doing your strategic plan, and libraries should research their options before starting the planning process. Examples are included in the Resources section at the end of the checklist.

Planning Checklist

- 1. Monitor broad societal trends at the national and international levels to envision the future.
- 2. Monitor trends in public library services.
- 3. Implement an ongoing, integrated process of community and library analysis, planning, evaluation, and community impact.
- 4. Conduct a demographic assessment of its service population as part of a regular strategic planning process.
- 5. Use a formal planning process covering the next two to five years with an implementation timetable.
- 6. Library Board, staff, and community members are involved in the planning process.
- 7. As part of the strategic plan library has a vision and mission statement, which is based on a review and assessment of community library service needs of the community.
- 8. Identify goals and measurable outcomes for the goals in order to gauge progress, effectiveness, and success.
- 9. Adopt a budget to support and fund its mission.
- 10. Communicate about the written strategic plan to the community.
- 11. Review and update the strategic plan regularly to determine progress in meeting goals.
- 12. Annually review local, state, and national public library statistics and use the information to evaluate and improve local services.
- 13. In addition to statistical usage data, use input, output, and outcome measures to gauge library's success in supporting broad community goals.
- 14. Complete and submit the Public Library Annual Report (PLAR) in a timely fashion.
- 15. Work with the Colorado Public Library Standards document in the planning process.