



Johnson County
Library

**JCL Strategic Plan
Summary**

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Executive Summary

For the last ten months, the Johnson County Library has been rewriting its Strategic Plan. We've listened to the community, we've listened to the staff, and we've listened to the library board. These groups have provided us insight that will help us to ensure our resources are utilized effectively and appropriately.

This process, as you may expect, has been lengthy and thorough. It has involved undertaking large, "broad stroke" initiatives like community meetings and staff input sessions, and it has involved small, targeted committees tasked with accomplishing specific portions of the work, like data condensing or goal writing.

This document will provide a brief history of this process from its inception to its current state, and will provide detail regarding how key decisions were made and how the process was carried out by library staff. It will also provide a detailed summation of the last few stages of the planning process, which were the production and compilation of specific goals for the library to work towards over the next five years. Finally, it will provide an overview of the next steps that the library will take to finalize the work we've done so far and turn it into a living, breathing plan.

Background

- 1. Initial planning phases, January 2013** – Ad Team decided on the structure of the strategic planning process by utilizing *Strategic Planning for Results*.
- 2. Community Meetings, April 10 and May 8, 2013** – Specific, representative members of the community were invited to weigh in on their priorities in two meetings facilitated by Jari Holland Buck. This built on the work of the Citizens Visioning Committee.
- 3. MindMixer feedback, April 2013 and ongoing**– A website called MindMixer was set up to capture suggestions from the general public. Participants could either respond to prompts or suggest their own ideas for what the library needs.
- 4. Staff meetings, May 2013** – Members of the library’s Administrative Team held a series of meetings for library staff to offer input. All staff members were invited, and two meetings were scheduled for non-business hours so that all staff, regardless of shift scheduling, could attend.
- 5. Data condensing, May/June 2013** – The input from the community meetings, the staff meetings, and MindMixer was condensed into digestible trends for the library’s Administrative Team. Based on these trends, the Administrative Team began to formulate responses.
- 6. Selection of the Portfolio of Services, June 17, 2013** – After viewing the data trends, the Administrative Team selected the areas of Education, Community Building, and Convenience as the three focal points of the Strategic Plan, which are referred to as our Portfolio of Services.
- 7. Library “All Managers” group goal writing, August 2013** – With the Portfolio of Services in hand, the “All Managers” group, consisting of every manager in the library, began to brainstorm goals to use as milestones. This process generated several dozen goals.
- 8. Ad Team created “goal clusters” at Westport library, 9/23/13** – From the dozens of goals generated by the All Managers group, the Administrative Team searched for common trends and themes that could be grouped to eliminate redundancy. This produced 31 “goal groups.”
- 9. “All Managers” formed small groups to distill the “goal groups” into broader goals, September 26, 2013** – The Administrative Team handed the “goal groups” back to the All Managers group, who then summarized the “goal groups” into broad, overarching goals. This produced 31 goals.
- 10. A Goal Compilation committee condensed the 31 goals into eight, October 2013** – A subcommittee of the All Managers group was tasked with further condensing the 31 goals into a more manageable number. This produced eight final goals, which were then edited for consistency of language and shared back with All Managers.

Key Decision Points

There were several key decision points that gave shape the strategic planning process. They are detailed below to give insight into the reasoning behind these decisions.

The strategic planning process would be as “grassroots” as possible. It was decided very early in the process that the process needed to gather input from all levels, not just managers, administrators, or department heads. People who were on the front lines of public service needed a chance to participate, as did the people who were the targets of library services. If we failed to gather ideas from these groups, then the entire strategic planning process would have been largely guesswork. For more accurate feedback, and to create a sense of engagement with all constituencies, the strategic plan had to be built from the ground up.

The input of three key groups would be gathered: the community, the library board, and the staff. After the decision was made to carry out a grassroots process, it had to be decided who the grassroots really were. We decided that we need to talk to the community that we serve, the library staff who works so hard to provide service the community, and the library board who govern and oversee the services that we provide. Our strategic planning process had to include mechanisms that gathered the ideas of these specific groups; if we left any of these groups out, vital voices would not be included in the discussion. Each of these groups has a unique perspective on the library that the other groups do not necessarily have access to, and so the balancing of these perspectives provides a truly holistic view of the library and the people it services.

The process would be as “in-house” as possible, with minimal use of external consultants. It was decided that completing the work without the use of external consultants would create a larger amount of staff buy-in. We wanted staff to know that Ad Team was truly engaged in the processes and had not assigned this important work to someone else, with the hopes that their increased engagement would lead to an increased amount of personal investment in the finished product. Additionally, while a consultant could bring an understanding of process to the table, they would never be able to match the deep knowledge that library staff has of our community.

The strategic plan would be democratic, with administrators empowering staff to take a leading role in its creation. After input was gathered, someone would need to actually synthesize all the information and turn it into achievable goals for the library. By making use of the collective intelligence of our entire managerial staff (as opposed to just the Administrative Team), the process would take advantage of the strengths of as many people as possible.

Results

At a result of the process detailed above, we have eight goals within our three portfolio areas that will guide our work for the next five years.

The goals, listed within their portfolio areas, are below in no particular order:

Portfolio area: **Education**

- Goal 1: Library staff will exemplify the brand promise in their interactions with people.
- Goal 2: People will achieve higher levels of personal success through digital literacy.
- Goal 3: People with specific educational or informational needs will be supported by the Library.

Portfolio area: **Community Building**

- Goal 4: People will connect and interact because of Library partnerships and collaborations.
- Goal 5: People will experience a welcoming library environment that meets their needs.

Portfolio area: **Convenience**

- Goal 6: People will find Library staff, materials, and services convenient and easy to access.
- Goal 7: Library staff will engage in a workforce that is collaborative, connected, efficient, and effective.
- Goal 8: People will experience library services and resources through the innovative use of technology.

Next Steps

Now that we have identified created our Portfolio of Services, which are the broad areas of focus for the library, and our goals, which will give us measurable, achievable ways to work towards our Portfolio items, we will (with the library board's approval) move forward with the creation of tactics.

Tactics are the nitty-gritty of the Strategic Plan. They are the actual methods we will use to achieve our goals. As such, they will inform the work plans of all library staff members. Literally, they will determine how staff members spend their days, and will ensure that our day-to-day activity is focused on achieving the initiatives put forth in the Strategic Plan. In this way, we will have taken the direct input of our community, our board, and our staff and turned it into meaningful work that will ensure the Johnson County Library remains a valued, relevant institution.

When the formulation of tactics is complete, the Administrative Team of the library will be able to use the tactics as guidelines when creating the library's annual budget. We will use the Balanced Scorecard Method to achieve this. In other words, the tax dollars that we collect will be allocated based on the priorities identified in the strategic plan, which come directly from the community we serve.

Works Cited

Nelson, Sandra. *Strategic Planning for Results*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2008. Print.