2023-2027 Strategic Plan

The Lewes Public Library is an independent, non-profit library operating under the Delaware Library Consortium, in concert with the Sussex County Department of Libraries. Not fully funded by taxpayer dollars, the Lewes Public Library relies heavily on the support of the community. With that support, the Library opened a new facility in 2016, marking the transition of the organization from a community lending library to a 21st-century community center.

The explosive growth in our area, coupled with lagging infrastructure, has made the societal role of the Library more expansive than ever. Working with focus groups comprised of private citizens, state agencies, local community organizations, and businesses, along with Library staff and volunteers the Strategic Planning Committee endeavors to create a document that accentuates what makes the library special today, and identifies areas for investment that will make us great tomorrow.

Based on surveys and focus group input, the Committee identified three strategic priorities:

- Infrastructure Capital
- Human Capital
- Information Capital

The following goals and action items reflect commonly identified areas for improvement. The Committee believes that responding to these improvement areas will enable the Library to fulfill its Vision and Mission, and better serve the residents of the greater Lewes area.

The success of the Library, and the goals and objectives outlined below, require increased and consistent funding. Strategies for obtaining the required funds to implement the Library's strategic plan are ongoing and fluid. The Library is currently working and will continue, to work to reach its goal of fully funding the Underwriters Endowment, and will regularly advocate for consistent and direct municipal financial support, and increased governmental subsidies.

The Vision and Mission of the Lewes Public Library

VISION STATEMENT

The Lewes Public Library will be an exemplary library in Delaware and a trusted civic, cultural, social and learning center. The Library will be a welcoming, comfortable center for the exchange and creation of ideas, as well as the preferred place for cultural and social interaction in the community.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Lewes Public Library anticipates the needs of the community and adapts, creates and supports classes and programs for all ages that encourage a love of reading, exploration and discovery. The Library provides access for a wide variety of educational, informational and recreational materials to all members of the community through traditional resources and emerging technologies.

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Strategic Priority Area #1:

Infrastructure Capital: The Library's updated facility provides significant value to our local community. A number of local organizations, state agencies, individuals, and businesses utilize library meeting spaces and study rooms. The Library provides the greater Lewes community with free and equitable access to technology, resources, and cultural enrichment opportunities.

Goal 1: Expand and/or reorganize operating hours of the library proper to optimize facility usage.

Objective: Fully staffed weekend hours with an engaged patron base.

1. Analyze current user data and identify days and times of reduced patron use.
2. Redistribute low-use hours into increased weekend hours.
3. Consider local school schedules to ensure the library is operating when the schools close for professional development, and other closures not recognized as national holidays.
4. Consider seasonal changes to the library's normal operating schedule.

Goal 2: Engage a facilities management firm to ensure clean, well-functioning building systems.

Objective: A clean and functional facility with minimal oversight from professional library staff.

1. Hire a property management firm.
2. Schedule an annual "deep-clean" for the entire building or hire an hourly-rate janitor/part-time custodian.
3. Create a volunteer team to assist with building care, maintenance, and minor repairs.
4. Work with the Friends of the Lewes Public Library to create a display plan, complete with professional furnishings, for sale items, located outside of the store.
5. Meet regularly with the property management firm for general facility updates and maintenance. PM should provide LPL with an opportunity to review, approve, deny, or modify any annual facility contracts.

Goal 3: Improve Library Signage.

Objective: Simplify library navigation and directional communication for patrons.

1. Work with circulation staff to identify common directional requests.
2. Engage professional assistance to determine signage theme and continuity.
3. Make signage accessible to users of all literacy levels.
4. Use the outdoor pavilion project as an opportunity to have Library signage on Freeman Hwy.
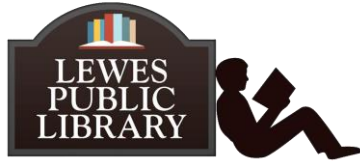
Goal 4: Provide library services, collections, database, and facilities orientation and continuing education for library patrons.

Objective: Measurable growth in usage and engagement.

1. Create and provide a simple welcome sheet for new card registrants.
2. Create a schedule for quarterly library skills and resources classes.
3. Create "how-to" and "did you know?" video collections on the Library website, social media sites, and Youtube Channel.
4. Create and execute a plan for outreach to centers of underserved community members, and engage their staff in training to familiarize them with library resources, particularly hybrid programs, and eResources.
5. Develop metrics for evaluating the success of welcome/educational efforts, and methods to report findings, regularly, to the board of commissioners.

Strategic Priority Area #2:

Human Capital: The Lewes Public Library recognizes the dynamic organizational culture created by staff, board members, and volunteers that enables the library to provide community-focused service, nurture strong and diverse partnerships, and engage stakeholders.

Goal #1: Achieve staffing levels appropriate to the general and consistent workload.

Objective: Complete an organizational chart with roles audited, and adjusted, and staff members added as needed.

1. Create an organizational chart of existing roles and responsibilities. The organizational chart should contain critical elements of the LPL's general workflow, including tasks completed by volunteers.
2. Audit current staff responsibilities and quantify position objectives using cost analysis.
3. Create a list of ideal staff roles and responsibilities, including new and/or reorganized roles. Special areas of consideration include outreach, facilities, promotions & social media, programs & events, and development and grant writing.
4. Assess additional costs associated with the new ideal.
5. Prioritize, and then implement changes and staffing, as feasible.
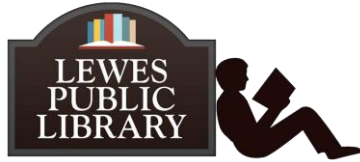
Goal #2: Enhance the procedure, and identify resources required for robust staff and commissioner onboarding.

Objective: Zero negative feedback from annual surveys on new hire training.

1. Gather and review existing training documentation and procedures. Identify gaps.
2. Determine training topics to cover with onboard training.
3. Update materials to reflect current priorities, processes, and procedures.
4. Ensure all employees have easy access to training materials and resources for "quick reference".
5. Review board materials and identify the major components of the library's workflow, place within the consortium, and general details that illustrate the types, and volume of, daily, library work. i.e. How does transit work? What is RFID? How do you schedule a meeting room?

**Goal #3: Develop and enhance ongoing staff training.**

Objective: Staff to meet annual training/professional development requirements.

1. Review current training available to staff and volunteers.
2. Identify any weaknesses and develop resources to fill in any gaps.
3. Identify staff training needs.
4. Be sure not to neglect areas surrounding advocacy and LPL finances.
5. Determine the frequency of mandatory training for all staff, and outline reporting requirements.
6. Identify training subject areas that can be provided by internal staff and those that will require outside providers/resources.
7. Research and engage, when necessary, external training platforms or area experts.

Goal #4: Develop a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Sensitivity training program for staff and volunteers.

Objective: All staff and volunteers complete the training.

1. Identify a training facilitator.
2. Explore topic areas and scenarios to address during training. (Is this just for professional development, or to address the needs at LPL for greater inclusion by engaging, educating, and empowering staff to improve language, policies and practices, reader's advisory, etc.
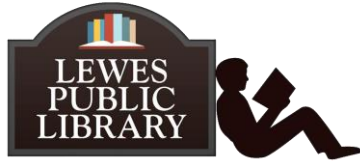
3. Determine optimal training frequency/platform to allow for participation by all staff and volunteers.
4. Conduct separate staff and volunteer trainings.
5. Partner or consult with people from the community who have expertise/experience that is not present at LPL.

Strategic Priority Area #3:

Information Capital: The Lewes Public Library continuously strives to provide a diverse, inclusive, and varied collection of materials, resources, and programs. The Library deeply values the partnerships created with other community organizations, agencies, and businesses that benefit the greater Lewes community in the form of programs, workshops, and learning opportunities.

**Goal #1: Improve community awareness of library resources and services.**

 Objective: Increase the use of materials and resources, and participation in programs, workshops, and other learning opportunities.

1. Work with media outlet(s) to produce a regular media outreach to promote upcoming events and general library services. I.e. Monthly column in the Cape Gazette, Delaware State News, or a regular radio feature.
2. Develop a regular, weekly schedule for engaging users through social media. I.e. Friday Reads.
3. Develop a social media editorial calendar. Senior staff to participate in regular meetings for planning releases and create a regular, scheduled workflow for implementation.
4. Develop a banner/section in the monthly newsletter to highlight library resources: a "did you know, or do you remember" feature.
5. Streamline communication channels. Develop criteria to measure the effectiveness of current channels, and make revisions or changes in communication channels based on the outcome of collected data.

Goal #2: Improve engagement of a broader user demographic.

Objective: Increased engagement among working families, children 5 – 8, users between the ages of 20 and 40, and seniors over 80 years old.

1. Identify gaps in programs, services, and resources for the target users.
2. Identify barriers to participation.
3. Acquire new resources and create new programs to fill identified gaps and address barriers.
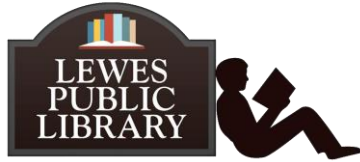
4. Identify existing and potential communication channels and partnerships to reach the target users.
5. Create outcome-based evaluations to measure success.

Goal #3: Prioritize library programs and the allocation of library resources.

Objective: Increase the Library's ROI (R = attendance, new users, strengthened partnerships, etc.).

1. Develop criteria for measuring the value of programs and services.
2. Based on developed criteria, create program, resource, and service-specific surveys.
3. Use Project Outcome, a toolkit from the Public Library Association, which allows libraries to use simple surveys and processes for analyzing outcomes and report findings to the Board of Commissioners on a regular basis.
4. Harvest data from the surveys to improve programs, resources, and services.

Goal #4: Engage, maintain, and nurture relationships with key community thought-leaders, particularly those not currently engaged with the library.

Objective: The creation of new and diverse partnerships.

1. Identify leaders who are not currently users/supporters of the library.
2. Identify organizations that serve our target users, and build relationships with the leaders identified above.
3. Meet partner organizations "where they are" through staff, board, and volunteer participation in local community organizations.

Approved by the Board of Commissioners December 20, 2022.