RISING TO THE CHALLENGE:
Re-Envisioning Public Libraries

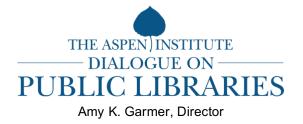## FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Based on the
Action Guide for Re-Envisioning Your Public Library

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THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
DIALOGUE ON
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

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INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed for facilitators who will use the Aspen Institute report, *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries,* and its companion, *Action Guide for Re-Envisioning Your Public Library*, as the framework for community engagement and strategic planning.

The purpose of your meeting, the objectives you seek, and the participants involved will all shape how you design and execute the agenda. The skills and techniques of an effective facilitator covered in this guide may be applied in any setting. This Facilitator's Guide includes the following content:

- **Responsibilities of an Effective Facilitator** - helps you to understand your role
- **Three Stages of Facilitation** - helps you to plan and get started
- **Suggested Guidelines for the Discussion** - tips for setting ground rules for the group to follow
- **Sample Talking Points, Sample Facilitation Questions** and **Sample Discussion Agendas** - content for developing your own facilitation script for using the Aspen Institute Action Guide and report
- **5 Steps in Planning a Public Dialogue** - includes important considerations for planning and executing a public dialogue drawn from the implementation pathway section of the Action Guide that facilitators will want to review

The Action Guide is complemented and enhanced by the LibraryVision.org website that serves as an online resource center. On the site, facilitators can access short videos, PowerPoint slides, worksheets, stories and dialogue models with document templates. These resources may be instructive as you prepare. They may also be used as part of your meeting for informing and engaging your participants.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE FACILITATOR

The facilitators of public dialogues have an important role and contribution to make in helping community members to understand and work with the report. The following is a list of suggested responsibilities to help facilitators be most effective in this role:

- Welcome all participants

- Present a set of guidelines for the discussion and test for agreement with the participants

- Open the discussion with a general, broad question

- Be prepared with additional, more specific questions

- Encourage everyone to participate

- Ensure balanced participation

- Remain neutral on the content of the discussion

- Practice active listening

- Encourage the expression of different points of view

- Help participants to understand each other and their different perspectives

- Summarize periodically

- Record key points

- Manage time

- Invite the 'reflective observers' to comment

- Provide concluding remarks and thank participants

THE THREE STAGES OF FACILITATION

1. PREPARE FOR THE SESSION

There are four key steps in preparing for the session:

- Read the report, *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries.*

- Review the sample agendas for a discussion beginning on page 13. Decide what, if any, adaptations you want to make for your session. Prepare an outline for your session.

- Select the 3 or 4 key questions you will pose in the discussion. Determine if you will need additional resources (opening remarks or short opening video) to provide context for the participants, who may need additional information or knowledge to frame specific issues for the discussion.

- Review the **Responsibilities of an Effective Facilitator** on page 5. Remember especially the importance of remaining neutral in the discussion.

2. FACILITATE THE DISCUSSION

Open the discussion with a brief review of the purpose of the session. Be sure everyone has a copy of the report or a summary document taken from the report. Review a brief set of ground rules or guidelines to follow in the discussion. Tell the group how you plan to proceed. Provide opening remarks or opening video for context.

Post the questions you have selected from the list provided on page 10 or those you have developed. Allow sufficient time for participants to comment on a question before you proceed to the next question.

Record the key comments and ideas on a flip chart.

Consider using the following suggested ACTivities from the Action Guide to engage attendees:

- Network map—found in the People section of the learning pathway
- SOAR Assessment—found in the learning pathway
- Strategies for Success—found in the leading pathway
- Engaging Community Leaders—found in the leading pathway

Use the last 10 minutes to review key points in the discussion, invite final comments, do a brief review of the session, inform the group about next steps and thank them for their participation.

3. END THE DISCUSSION

- When about 15 minutes remain, pause and ask if there is anything else anyone wants to say before you move to close and adjournment.

- Summarize key points.

- Summarize what the next steps will be and when you will contact participants to share a summary report or further activities. It is important to let your participants know that this is the beginning of a process of engagement and action, not a one-time event.

- Thank attendees for their participation.

- Set expectations for ongoing dialogue and action.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR THE DISCUSSION

One important tool for facilitators is a set of ground rules or guidelines for the group to follow. When the discussion time is short, it can be especially helpful for the facilitator to present a set of proposed rules or guidelines for the group to consider. Usually the question, "Will everyone commit to following these rules?" elicits general agreement from participants.

When developing your proposed set of guidelines, consider the group whose discussion you are facilitating. The following is an example of guidelines you might implement:

- Take turns to speak and to listen.
- Listen to understand.
- Expect and respect differences.
- Suspend judgment about the ideas and opinions expressed.
- Be authentic – say what you mean.
- Think before you speak.
- Be clear and succinct in the expression of your ideas.

GENERAL OUTLINE FOR THE DISCUSSION

1. INTRODUCE THE DISCUSSION

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself.
- If appropriate and time allows, ask participants to introduce themselves.
- Review the purpose of the discussion session.
- Present the Suggested Guidelines for the Discussion, and check for agreement among participants. (See suggested list on page 7.)
- Explain the format and provide any other background information.

Invite participants to spend a few minutes in quiet reflection before discussion starts.

To help the participants prepare for their participation (if they have not been provided with background materials beforehand), ask them to do one of the following activities:

- Review the Strategies for Success and Action Steps on pages 22-27 of this Guide
- Review one of the lists of Action Steps on pages 23-27
- Reflect for a few moments on *why I am here* or *the question I most want to discuss is …*

2. BEGIN THE DISCUSSION

Open with a general, broad-based question. For example, first explore the strengths and needs of the community so that you can lay the groundwork about how the library can be more involved in meeting community goals. (See sample facilitation questions on page 10.)

3. FACILITATE THE DISCUSSION

- Invite participants to offer their points of view and ideas.
- Keep the discussion going. Be alert to who is ready to speak and call on them.
- Probe for deeper thinking.
- Record key points or ideas. A flip chart is an effective tool for this because everyone can see the ideas taking shape.
- Watch the time. Be alert to the progress of the discussion and the time remaining.

SAMPLE TALKING POINTS

- The Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program created the Dialogue on Public Libraries to help advance the work that public libraries are doing to address community challenges and to support the transformation of public libraries for the digital age.

- To do this, the Aspen Institute brought together a select 35-member working group that met twice in the project's first year to examine the evolving societal role of the public library and to shape and advance a perspective that re-envisions public libraries for the future.

- The result was a report, *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, that was published in October, 2014. The report is built upon the considerable knowledge, insights and experience shared by the experts in the working group. The Aspen Institute also met with key library groups and with local government administrative leaders to test its themes and benefit from their suggestions to make the report stronger.

- As the report says, the public library is no longer a nice-to-have amenity—but rather an essential part of a community's infrastructure and a key partner in sustaining the educational, economic and civic health of the community.

- While the mission of public libraries hasn't changed, its role in the community is changing, and so is its value proposition.

- The old library model was built around information scarcities—the high cost of storing and searching for knowledge.

- This model is giving way to an emerging value proposition that is built around the public library's three key assets—its people, place and platform.

  - **PEOPLE**–The library as people reflects the shift away from building collections to building human capital, relationships and knowledge networks in the community.

  - **PLACE**–Today's library is both a physical and virtual place, but it continues to be the physical presence of the library that anchors it most firmly in the community.

  - **PLATFORM**–The library is user-centered; it empowers users to determine what it provides and how users make use of those resources.

- According to the report, public libraries that align their services to support local community goals will find the greatest opportunities for success in the years ahead.

- That is why we have all gathered for our own public dialogue—to discuss how our library can align its services to support the goals of our community.

SAMPLE FACILITATION QUESTIONS

The following are questions to get a conversation started. Questions can be developed based on which section of the Action Guide you are drawing from or focusing on.

1. What kind of a community do we want? What are the most important attributes or essential components?
2. What are the core factors that give life to this community?
3. When you first came to this community, what were your most positive and powerful impressions?
4. As you reflect upon the many shifts happening in the world today, describe one that gives you hope. How might this community respond to this one big hope?
5. What exists now that will enable our community to realize its dreams and aspirations?
6. It is 3-5 years from now and the library and community have a thriving, productive relationship. What does this look like? What three steps were critical to making this happen?

The questions below were developed for use in Aspen Institute roundtable dialogues. Each set of questions focuses on specific topics, as indicated.

Community Goals and Aspirations

- What are some of the aspirations and goals *for the community* that participants would like to see accomplished in the next 5-10 years?
- Which of these are priorities?
- What does the library do very well now to address these goals and priorities, and how do you know?
- Where are new opportunities for the library to make a difference, contribute and innovate? Consider trends (in technology, demographics or the economy) that could work in favor of these new opportunities.

Role of the Library in Education or Community Development

- What means do the library and community have to identify their educational, workforce and community development needs?
- How is the library currently engaging the community within and outside of its walls to address community learning needs?
- How are libraries in general transforming their spaces, programs and other assets to address community priorities in these areas?
- How are government, business, philanthropy and community organizations working with libraries to pursue their own goals in these areas?
- What are the key barriers to achieving these goals?
- What are the elements and indicators of successful collaborations?
- What is possible to achieve in the short term?
- What will take longer?
- How would you begin the process of implementation?
- In what ways can the library achieve greater efficiencies and impact to address needs for long-term sustainability?
- What new opportunities are available for revenue to support library programs and services to the community?

Relationships, Collaborations and Sustainability

- In what ways can the library and community partners stimulate cross-fertilization and support from different sectors of the community?

- How does the community address the need for sustainable solutions?

- What new opportunities are available for revenue to support library programs and services to the community?

- What barriers may impede progress in the future?

- How do communities become resilient?

- What does a resilient community look like?

- What is the role of the library in building and strengthening networks that contribute to community resiliency?

- How do communities create opportunities for their members to be successful in their personal and civic lives?

- How do communities ensure equitable access to these opportunities?

- What is the role of the library in building and strengthening these opportunities?

- Conversely, how are government, business, philanthropy and community organizations working with libraries to pursue their goals in these areas?

- How can the transformation of relationships with libraries and the assets that libraries bring to the community lead to a greater capacity for developing solutions and overcoming barriers?

- What are the elements of successful collaborations?

PLANNING A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP WITH SAMPLE AGENDA

Workshop Agenda

The 90-minute workshop will use the SOAR module (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) from the Aspen Institute's Action Guide to direct the agenda. The agenda includes a brief introductory presentation (establishes that this is first about the community, then about the long-term planning for the library) and moderated small group conversations.

> 10 minutes – introduction and opening presentation
>
> 60 minutes – SOAR (15 minutes each element) (see handout on pages 20 and 21)
>
> 10 minutes – gallery walk and voting on priorities
>
> 10 minutes – conclusory discussion and adjourn

Facilitators

Skilled facilitators are important to the success of community engagement workshops. The facilitators' role is to ask good questions and then let the people speak, recording exactly what people say so that they can see it reflected back to them. If the library staff has not been trained to facilitate community conversations, then workshop planners should seek the assistance of skilled facilitators from other community organizations, other libraries or consultants who work with the state library. Plan for one facilitator per small group of participants (between 4-8 persons per small group is ideal). Facilitators could be asked to serve as group rapporteurs or additional persons with good listening skills may be retained to act as scribe for each small group. The scribe's role is to write down the recommended SOAR elements on flip chart pages for sharing and voting in the larger group. Secure bilingual facilitators if you plan to host workshop groups in a second language.

Workshop planning process

- **Identify target groups and partner organizations.** Criteria to consider include **geography** (making sure you are including all neighborhoods in your community) and **audience** (diversity is one consideration; a second consideration is groups where the library may have a built-in audience already, including groups that meet at the library; a third consideration is where you can partner with a group that already has scheduled meetings such as a regular neighborhood association meetings, civic or business group meetings, institutional planning or board meetings, etc.). Be creative and inclusive in your outreach.
- **Secure dates, times and locations.** It is advisable to hold workshops at different times (some in the evening, others during daytime hours). The more convenient for participants, the better turnout you will get. Make sure you have venues with sufficient space for multiple small group conversations to take place at the same time.
- **Draft and send invitations**. Make sure you have a process prepared for managing inquiries and RSVPs.
- **Prepare the introductory presentation.**
- **Secure and train facilitators and reporters/scribes.** One meeting or conference call for planning purposes, and one call or meeting immediately before the workshops for last minute details should be sufficient.
- **Get supplies.** You will need one flip chart on an easel per small group, markers, dot stickers (sufficient for each participant to have up to six dots for voting purposes), tape (or some means of affixing individual flip chart pages to the wall to create a gallery of ideas (where participants can vote-up their priority recommendations). Plan for light refreshments.
- **Send reminders to participants.**
- **Follow-up with thank you notes to participants and partners.**
- **Synthesize and write-up report of workshops.**

Sample Agenda for SOAR Community Engagement Workshop

PURPOSE: In order to engage city/county residents more broadly and hear directly from them about their aspirations, priorities and goals for the community, the library will convene a series of community engagement workshops to be held on _____. The workshops will be open to the public broadly; however, each workshop may target a different segment of the population to get specific input and buy-in from these subgroups. Participants will identify priorities for shaping the community and the library. Reports of the workshops will be compiled and used to inform the library's further engagement with community leaders and its strategic planning.

FORMAT: Library staff will set-up the space. The 90-minute workshops will use the SOAR module (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) to structure the workshop agenda, as follows:

>   10 minutes – introduction and opening presentation (library director/facilitator)

>   60 minutes – SOAR (15 minutes each element – facilitated small groups) (see SOAR handout on pages 20 and 21)

>   10 minutes – gallery walk and participant voting on priorities (vote on Opportunities & Aspirations lists only)

>   10 minutes – conclusory discussion, thank you and adjourn (led by library director or facilitator)

INTRO: The agenda will include a brief introductory presentation by [library director/workshop partner or facilitator] on the purpose of the workshop and the importance of hearing from the community. The opening presenters and facilitators should emphasize that these community conversations are first about the community and its priorities (not necessarily about priorities for the library at this point), and then about how the library might help the community to achieve those goals and priorities.

SMALL GROUPS: After the introduction, divide the participants into groups of people for facilitated small group conversations. The role of the small group facilitator is to introduce the SOAR structure, prompt the discussion as necessary by using the discussion prompts/questions on the SOAR handouts, keep the conversation on track (about 15 minutes for each element, with library staff helping with time-keeping), and assist the group with reporting out/writing down its responses to the prompts.

RECORDING DISCUSSION: Library staff should collect each set of flip chart pages and tape them to walls for later viewing. Each element of SOAR will be grouped together (Strength pages together, Opportunities pages together, etc.) For voting purposes – the only lists that will be voted on are the Opportunities and Aspirations – these are the focal points for action going forward. If there is insufficient space to post the Strengths and Results pages, then these should be collected and retained by library staff for summarizing and reporting later. Responses should be recorded in list form for easier reading and voting by all participants.

GALLERY WALK & VOTING: Following the conclusion of the small group discussions on Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results, all participants should be invited to review the Opportunities and Aspirations identified by each group and vote for their choice of the top three priorities in Opportunities and the top three priorities in Aspirations. These priorities will guide the library and its board of trustees in strategic planning and the development of partnerships, programs and services going forward.

CONCLUSION: The facilitator/library director will ask participants to identify one idea about the community or the library that stands out more clearly for them at the conclusion of the session than it had prior to the session. In the interest of time, the facilitator can ask for volunteers to share their one idea rather than going around the entire room. The facilitator will thank everyone and adjourn the workshop. Staff will collect the flip chart pages and all materials for compilation of report and future use.

Sample Agenda for a Full-Day Workshop for Library Professionals

The full-day participatory workshop utilizes the *Rising to the Challenge* report and the companion Action Guide to provide a framework for using the ACTivities to begin the process of aligning your library—its programs, services, and resources—to support the goals, priorities and aspirations of your community. The Action Guide focuses on three areas—the library as People, Place, and Platform—in order to transform library service.

Morning (9:30 AM – noon)

Welcome and introductions – 15-20 minutes

The Basics from the Aspen Report – revelations and implications, and why they are important for the future of libraries – 15-20 minutes

> The Library as People – 30 minutes (table talk for 10-15 minutes, full group for 15-20 minutes)
>
> The Library as Place – 30 minutes (table talk for 10-15 minutes, full group for 15-20 minutes)
>
> The Library as Platform – 30 minutes (table talk for 10-15 minutes, full group for 15-20 minutes)

Synthesizing and thinking about what is unique about your community – 15-20 minutes

Break for Lunch (noon – 1:30 PM)

Afternoon (1:30 PM – 3:45 PM)

Brief recap – 5 minutes

ACTivity 1 – Aligning library services in support of community goals (from the leading pathway of the Action Guide, p. 28) – 15 minutes

- Identify 2 or 3 priorities or goals for your community. How does your library support these goals? – 10 minutes for table talk/group discussion
- Full group discussion – 20 minutes

ACTivity 2 – Engaging your community – the questions you ask (from the section of the Action Guide pp. 35-36) – 15 minutes

- Identify key players for a community leaders meeting. Who are the "must-have" players to ensure are "at the table"? – 10 minutes
- Identify segments of the community that you can partner with based on your unique library and community – 10 minutes
- Holding the dialogues and integrating with partners – full group discussion – 20 minutes

Conclusion

Review of resources available to help you (from the implementing pathway and appendix of the Action Guide pp. 42-69; reference resources are available at LibraryVision.org) – 5 minutes

Wrap-up, feedback, and evaluation – 20-25 minutes

Sample Agenda for a 60-minute small group conference session using 15 Action Steps for Library Leaders

Facilitator's Introduction of the Workshop Exercise: 15 Action Steps for Library Leaders
(Can be adapted for use with Action Steps and accompanying worksheets on pages 23-27 in this Guide.)

Instructions for Starting the Exercise: Now you have an opportunity to try an exercise from the Action Guide first hand. You can explore how this framework can provide new insights and ideas for action for you to take back to your own library.

This is a 3-step exercise that should take about 45 minutes.

STEP 1: Individuals quietly complete the worksheet for their own library (7-8 minutes)

Take the next 7-8 minutes to read through the 15 Action Steps for Library Leaders. Then, answer the questions for your own library. See handout on pages 23 and 24.

STEP 2: In groups of 3-4 people, discuss the Action Steps each person chose as priorities and the strategies and resources you would need to advance the action step (10-15 minutes, depending on size of the group)

One of the fundamental principles of the Aspen Institute's work is that new insights arise from engaging in inquiry and dialogue with others, so we ask participants to get together in groups of 3-4 to now discuss the priority Action Steps you selected and the resources you will need to make it happen.

STEP 3: Report out to the larger group (10-15 minutes)

We want to hear which action steps you selected and if there are common themes or ideas emerging. Invite speakers to share what libraries they are from when they identify which Action Steps are priorities and why/what is needed for implementation.

STEP 4: Summarize highlights:

1. Identify the top vote-getters on the Action Steps for Library Leaders that you heard, and then mention a few others that were identified.
2. Note if there are any trends or themes emerging.
3. Highlight a couple of the strategies for pursuing these action steps that were mentioned. You may note that some or many involve reaching out to engage partners in the community in order to tap the resources needed, and suggest that the Action Guide has some helpful resources for preparing to do this.
4. Close on a note of working together, as networks of library professionals developing and sharing best practices. There are many resources available to get you started, no matter how stretched your staff and resources may be.
5. Invite participants to share their own work with the Aspen Institute at the LibraryVision.org website. We are looking for stories that inspire and share great ideas with others to strengthen a community of practice that supports the evolution and transformation of libraries.

5 STEPS IN PLANNING A PUBLIC DIALOGUE

1. Date/Venue/Name

When securing a date and a venue for your public dialogue, here are some factors to consider:

- What is the length of the event? Time of day?
- Is this one event or a dialogue that takes place across multiple days?
- Are you serving refreshments or a meal?
- What are possible venues?
- What is the capacity of the selected venue? When visiting venues, keep in mind that the format of the event – panels, roundtables, town-hall – will lend itself to different types of rooms.
- Consider how set-up will facilitate interaction. Will the set-up be theater-style (chairs in rows?) or will it be seating at round tables? How many at a table? If food is involved, table seating may be best.
- Who manages audio/visual needs? Is there a cost associated with those? Consider future uses of the video and photos when considering what level of A/V to use.
- If the venue does not have the proper number of chairs and tables you may need to rent from an outside source. Make sure to ask the venue about delivery of A/V, seating, catering, etc.
- What will you title your dialogue? You can develop a catchy name for your event or go with something that captures the spirit of the gathering: Public Dialogue for the <name here> Library.

2. Plan

Developing a plan that is interesting, engaging and accomplishes your goals is the most critical element when scheduling your public dialogue. Consider the following when constructing your dialogue plan:

- Start by determining the goals of your dialogue.
- Establish a common starting point. What provides context and how do attendees get to that?
- Is there one compelling speaker who can kick things off? Will s/he take questions from the audience?
- Provide a brief set of background readings (make the Aspen Institute report, *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, and other resources about the community and its aspirations available beforehand).
- If you would like to include representatives from different sectors around a topic, a panel discussion can be an effective way to accomplish this.
- Resource participants or experts provide an opportunity to bring in additional knowledge and conversation. It is also an opportunity to bring together experts from outside your community.
- Remember to have diversity among your speakers by sector, discipline, socio-economic background, gender, race, etc.
- If you are holding a panel or roundtable, make sure to select a knowledgeable, engaging moderator who can move the dialogue along and bring up key points to be discussed.

3. Capturing the Dialogue

Identify one or two individuals who can take notes to capture the discussions taking place. If budget permits, consider an audio recording or video recording. One or all of these is helpful for developing a post-event summary or for a newsletter article, e-blast or use on social media.

Consider assigning a staff member or volunteer to take a few photos on a phone camera to use on social media if you are live blogging or tweeting the events. These photos will also be beneficial for any follow-up promotion.

4. Logistics

- A/V arrangements based on agenda and/or speaker needs
- Refreshments
- Invitations to guests
- Handouts or take-away materials
- Promotion

5. Feedback

Create a way for attendees to provide feedback or other thoughts and ideas following the meeting. Feedback could be captured in many ways:

- Electronic survey sent after the meeting
- Evaluation card handed out at meeting or placed on chairs
- Comment box in one or two locations
- Email – provide your address to attendees
- Phone – provide your number to attendees

HANDOUTS

The following pages can be used
as handouts.

Community Engagement Workshop
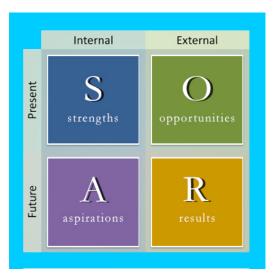
SOAR ANALYSIS HANDOUT

SOAR stands for Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results

SOAR analysis is a way of assessing and describing an organization. It uses a process called appreciative inquiry to focus on an organization's strengths, not its weaknesses.

SOAR encourages:

- Collaboration
- Shared understanding and collective wisdom
- Representation of all stakeholders
- A wider perspective and whole-system analysis
- Commitment to action
- Utilization of strengths
- Desire to build on strengths

SOAR Questions

Strengths: What can we build on? (15 minutes)

- What is the library doing well?
- What is the library known for?
- What makes the library unique?
- What key resources give the library an advantage in a world where information resources can be found nearly everywhere?

Opportunities: What are our best possible future opportunities? (15 minutes)

- What changes do you expect to see over the next five years – in the community and in the state?
- As we look at the changes you have identified:
    - Which changes could have a positive impact on the library?
    - Where could the library make a difference?
- What are key areas of untapped potential for the library?

Aspirations: What do we care deeply about? (15 minutes)

- What kind of community do we want? What are the most important attributes or essential components?
- If you could wave a magic wand and transform this community, what change would you most want to see?
- Thinking more globally – as you reflect on the changes happening in the world today, describe one that gives you hope. How might this community respond to this one big hope?

Results: How will we know we are succeeding? (15 minutes)

- Considering our strengths, opportunities, and aspirations, how will we know we are on track in achieving our goals?
- What measurable results do we want to see? What measurable results will we be known for?
- Imagine that it is 2025 and our community has been recognized as one of the five best communities in the country. What is said in the proclamation? What did we do to receive this recognition?

Expanding access to education, learning opportunities and social connections for all is one of the great challenges of our time. It is a challenge made more urgent by the rapid transition to a new economy in which knowledge and creativity are the drivers of productivity and economic growth, and information, technology and learning are central to economic performance and prosperity.

Public libraries are essential institutions for meeting this challenge.

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PUBLIC LIBRARIES

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

1. ALIGN LIBRARY SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF COMMUNITYGOALS

Public libraries that align their services to support local community goals will find the greatest opportunities for success in the years ahead. This will require a level of flexibility and adaptability to change as community needs change.

It will also require collaboration among libraries, policy makers and community partners to redefine the role of libraries as institutions that inspire learning, drive development, grow social capital and create opportunities.

2. PROVIDE ACCESS TO CONTENT IN ALL FORMATS

As the public library shifts from a repository for materials to a platform for learning and participation, its ability to provide access to vast amounts of content in all formats is vital. Libraries face two immediate major challenges in providing access to content in all forms:

- o Being able to procure and share e-books and other digital content on the same basis as physical versions
- o Having high capacity, easily scalable broadband technologies in every library that deliver and help to create content

Stakeholders must work together to find solutions to these challenges that meet the community's needs and work for content creators, publishers and the public.

3. ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries need to transform their service model to meet the demands of the knowledge society while securing a sustainable funding base for the future. Achieving this means libraries need to:

- o Identify reliable revenue resources for both daily operations and long-term planning and investment
- o Explore alternative governance structures and business models that maximize efficient and sustainable library operations and customer service
- o Become more skilled at measuring outcomes rather than counting activities
- o Balance the local and national library value proposition to consider economies of scale in a networked world without compromising local control.

4. CULTIVATE LEADERSHIP

Leadership is needed to build communities and public libraries that thrive and succeed together. Every community needs a vision and a strategic plan, with input from all stakeholder groups. Key steps include:

- o improving communications with community leaders
- o developing community champions
- o strengthening intersections with diverse communities and communities of color
- o reaching out to and engaging with young-professional organizations and demonstrating the collective impact of partners working together

*Everyone has a stake in the
healthy, engaged community
that the public library helps to
sustain. There are specific
steps that individuals and
organizations can take to set
their communities and
libraries on a path to success
in the 21st century knowledge
society.*

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15 ACTION STEPS
for LIBRARY LEADERS

1. Define the scope of the library's programs, services and offerings around community priorities, recognizing that this process may lead to choices and trade-offs.

2. Collaborate with government agencies at the local, state and federal levels around shared objectives. This includes partnerships with schools to drive learning and educational opportunities through the community.

3. Partner with local businesses, chambers of commerce and community colleges to provide access to curricula and resources, to technology and certification programs and to job search resources to maintain a highly skilled yet highly flexible workforce.

4. Engage the community in planning and decision making, and seek a seat at tables where important policy issues are discussed and decisions made.

5. Connect resources from other agencies or libraries to the library platform rather than reinventing the wheel or always going solo.

6. Develop partnerships and collaborations with other libraries and knowledge networks that can contribute to efficiencies, using the opportunities provided by digital technologies.

7. Support the concept of a national digital platform to share collections nationally while continuing to maintain a local presence and focus; participate in content-sharing networks and platforms.

8. Deploy existing resources in new ways.

9. Collaborate in negotiations with publishers on reasonably priced and easily accessible access to e-content and develop win-win solutions like "buy-it-now" options.

10. Provide mobile devices for in-library, in-community and at-home use.

11. Measure library outcomes and impacts to better demonstrate the library's value to the community and communicate these outcomes to key partners and policy makers.

12. Communicate the library's story of impact directly to the public, partners, stakeholders and policy makers. Include the new vision built on the library's people, place and platform assets.

13. Develop richer online library experience and stronger competencies in using digital and social media to demonstrate the library's role in the digital transformation.

14. Change long-held rules and operating procedures that impede the development of the library's spaces and platform.

15. Take proactive and sustained steps to brand the library as a platform for community learning and development.

ACTivity

Review each of the Action Steps for Library Leaders and identify the top five that offer the most promise to your community.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Select one or two of the above that are important and feasible for implementation in the short term.

1. _____

2. _____

How will you begin the process of implementation? What is your first step?

_____

_____

_____

What support would you need and where would you get it?

_____

_____

_____

What resources would you need and where would you get them?

_____

_____

_____

What would you need in order to move on with the other three action steps identified?

_____

_____

_____

*Everyone has a stake in the
healthy, engaged community
that the public library helps to
sustain. There are specific
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libraries on a path to success
in the 21st century knowledge
society.*

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15 ACTION STEPS
for POLICY MAKERS

1. Use the authority of office to bring together community stakeholders to create a comprehensive strategic plan for the library and other knowledge institutions in the community.

2. Define libraries as part of the community's priority infrastructure along with other established infrastructure priorities such as schools, transportation and parks, and make sustainable, long-term funding that reflects the library's value to the community a budget priority.

3. Develop strategic alliances and partnerships with local library leaders to advance educational, economic and social goals.

4. Leverage the economic development potential of the public library as a community platform.

5. Make access to government information a model for curating open data.

6. Integrate librarians and state library agencies into development planning and policy making in all departments and at all levels of government.

7. Reduce barriers to libraries' ability to access some funding sources in authorizing and appropriations legislation.

8. Review state-level policies that affect the public library's ability to transform itself for the future.

9. Support a study on funding and governance structures for public libraries to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that will lead to the development of stronger, more efficient public libraries.

10. Support and accelerate deployment of broadband, including high-speed, scalable broadband, to all libraries.

11. Develop local, state and national plans to address digital readiness.

12. Promote the deployment of wireless hotspots in libraries and other public places, especially in economically disadvantaged and minority communities where there are fewer Wi-Fi hotspots, to access the library's platform anytime, anywhere.

13. Support rural and small libraries to ensure that all residents have access to world-class resources regardless of where they live.

14. Promote and invest in the infrastructure for a national digital platform that is scalable, flexible and serves diverse needs and new uses.

15. Be an informed champion for the library and what it offers in the community.

Everyone has a stake in the healthy, engaged community that the public library helps to sustain. There are specific steps that individuals and organizations can take to set their communities and libraries on a path to success in the 21st century knowledge society.

15 ACTION STEPS
for the COMMUNITY

1. Collaborate on the development of a comprehensive strategic plan for the community's information and knowledge ecosystem, including the library and other knowledge institutions in the community.

2. Develop strategic partnerships and alliances with public libraries around content or specific organizational or community needs.

3. Bring diverse expertise to bear on helping libraries create and share technology tools.

4. Connect knowledge resources in the community to the library's knowledge networks.

5. Participate in the library's platform for curating local history and culture.

6. Leverage the economic development potential of the public library as a community platform.

7. Bring resources, including financial resources and technical expertise, to partner with libraries where objectives align well.

8. Volunteer organizational and technical expertise to mentor and support learning that takes place in library spaces and on its platform, including in innovation labs (especially those aimed at youth), maker and hacker spaces and resource-rich co-working spaces.

9. Structure grant opportunities in ways that small and rural libraries can take advantage of them; for example, not always emphasizing cutting-edge technology.

10. Leverage foundation or corporate donations to public libraries through the creation of a public-private trust for libraries.

11. Support the deployment of broadband, Wi-Fi and digital literacy skills throughout the community, especially to economically disadvantaged, underserved and other special needs populations.

12. Advocate on behalf of the long-term sustainability of public libraries.

13. Collaborate with libraries in areas of mutual interest.

14. Explore the library's people, place and platform assets.

15. Support efforts to re-envision and rebrand the library as a vital community instituions in the digital era.

15 ACTION STEPS
for LIBRARY TRUSTEES

Everyone has a stake in the healthy, engaged community that the public library helps to sustain. There are specific steps that individuals and organizations can take to set their communities and libraries on a path to success in the 21st century knowledge society.

1. Tell the library's story about its impact directly to the public, policy makers, community leaders and other stakeholders. Include the new vision built upon the library's people, place and platform.

2. Know the community's master plan and ensure that the library's strategic plan aligns with it. Communicate this to the community. Be involved in creating the community's master plan.

3. Support efforts to re-envision and rebrand the library as a vital community institution in the digital era.

4. Change long-held policies that impede the development of the library's people, place and platform.

5. Take proactive and sustainable steps to brand the library as a platform for community learning and development.

6. Leverage the economic development potential of the library as a community platform.

7. Support the deployment of broadband, Wi-Fi an digital literacy skills throughout the community, especially to economically disadvantaged, underserved and other special needs populations.

8. Ensure that the library's programs, services and offerings are defined around community priorities, recognizing that this process may lead to choices, trade-offs or changes to the ways in which existing resources are deployed.

9. Work with the library director to plan a community engagement effort to identify aspirations and strategies to set the community and the library on a path to success in the 21st century knowledge society.

10. Ensure that the library has the means to measure library outcomes and impacts to demonstrate the library's value to the community. Communicate these outcomes to key policy makers, partners and other community leaders.

11. Take steps to ensure that diversity of membership on the Board reflects the diversity of the community.

12. Support the library director and staff by providing appropriate benefits and funding for their professional development.

13. Include a member of the city, county or town council on the library board of trustees with the responsibility to serve as a liaison between the two bodies.

14. Become involved in efforts to advance the future of libraries beyond your local level – at the state and national level.

15. Give attention to planning for the future of the library – succession planning for leadership, board memberships, et.

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