

Contra Costa County Library STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2017

Through its long history, Contra Costa County Library has pioneered library services to enhance the diverse and unique communities in Contra Costa County. Presented here is the Contra Costa County Library Strategic Plan 2014-2017. This plan continues the Library's remarkable legacy as a community-driven organization dedicated to bringing people and ideas together. Using extensive input from community members, the plan identifies a vibrant vision of library services along with goals and objectives taken directly from research findings to ensure the Library continues a long tradition of listening to and serving the community.

BACKGROUND

Contra Costa County Library was established on July 21, 1913. Today the Contra Costa County Library serves communities through 26 libraries located across the county. Enter any Contra Costa County Library and you will be met with rich collections to meet reading and research needs, knowledgeable and welcoming staff to help with one on one reference, vibrant programs such as children's storytimes, WiFi access to high-speed internet for personal computing devices, public computers with a variety of personal computing programs, and quiet study space or meeting rooms.

Library service does not stop with the physical building. The Contra Costa County Library expands services wherever residents live or work and creates services that will enhance life skills at every age. The Library expands reading skills and opportunities at various locations outside of community libraries: Project Second Chance, the adult literacy program; library services at the Juvenile Hall and Orin Allen Youth Services Facility; Michael Chavez Center, serving the Monument Community in Concord; and the Rossmoor Retirement Community.

In 2012, the Library received the coveted Institute of Museum and Library Services National Medal for its many achievements in bringing the Library to the community. In recognizing the Contra Costa County Library, the IMLS cited innovative services such as Discover & Go, the online museum pass program;

Snap & Go, enabling customers the convenience of using Quick Response (QR) codes to access library services; and Library-A-Go-Go, providing commuters with library materials at BART stations in El Cerrito (Del Norte) and Pittsburg, as well as at the Discovery Bay Sandy Cove shopping center. In recognition of its contribution to the community and its history of innovation and public service, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors declared 2013 as the Year of the Library (Contra Costa County, 2012).

In 2004, the Library embarked on a strategic plan process to respond to county residents' needs and preferences in library service. The resulting 2006 Strategic Plan indentified four strategic initiatives: reading, information for lifelong learning, collaboration, and branding. The plan also realigned libraries and services in a peer library structure.

In 2011, a strategic plan review revealed that most of the changes proposed in the 2006 plan had been accomplished and the guiding principles held true. However, the review also identified the need for a new plan that addressed the rapid changes shaping technology, library services and the needs of Contra Costa County communities.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND METHODOLOGY

In 2013 a planning team was formed to spearhead a new strategic plan to meet the current needs of the many and varied communities served by the Contra Costa County Library. The new plan would be an essential tool to help Library administrators, managers and staff prioritize their work, resources and programs. The overriding intent of the plan, shared by all on the planning committee, was to devise a means of listening to the community, seeking their counsel and crafting strategies, services and programs that meet the aspirations of each of the communities served by Contra Costa County's 26 libraries.

The Library first conducted a self-assessment and strongly identified with key themes of public library service, specifically the 2006 plan's emphasis on providing easy, equitable and free access to all. Reading and literacy were also recognized as key activities of public library service supported by the broader community and library staff.

An internal SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) was conducted by the planning team to assess the library's present standing. Two areas were identified as hallmarks of the Library, customer service and the employment of technology to benefit the customer.

The initial assessment led to the drafting of a planning vision statement and key goals, however, the planning team agreed that it was essential to collect community input before finalizing any elements of the plan.

COMMUNITY RESEARCH PROCESS

True to their desire to design a plan that honored the voice and needs of their communities, the planning committee undertook an aggressive and comprehensive community research program. This necessitated a major research component unlike any undertaken by the Library before. The planning team designed a three-pronged qualitative research process to gather community input from across the county. Conducted from June through October 2013, the entire library staff along with city and community partners actively engaged in the research process that included surveys, key informant interviews and town hall meetings (a full report on the research methodology and results can be found in the Research Appendix):

- **Community Survey** – An online survey was chosen as the best method to invite input, ideas and recommendations from a broad array of community members. A 19-question online survey with open-ended and Likert rating scale questions was employed to determine: demographic information; how people use library collections and facilities; and what they envision their public library to be. To capture as much input as possible, English and Spanish versions of the survey were posted on the Library website and paper copies were provided at community libraries. The survey was promoted by print, social media, news stories, local city and County websites and email blasts. Over 4,600 people responded. Analysis of survey data by age, gender, ethnicity, income and city, plus patterns found in the narrative responses, would allow for both countywide institutions and local community libraries to be responsive to the information gathered about the user’s experience.
- **Key Informant Interviews** – The Key Informant Interview method was chosen because it is one of the best ways to gain insights from community leaders (elected officials, business leaders, civic organizations, educators and foundations) and to establish lasting partnerships. These interviews were qualitative, in-depth conversations with key stakeholders in each of the 26 branch communities. The 278 interviews conducted provided an ideal opportunity to collect candid impressions, concerns, suggestions and aspirations about the library from some of the most influential members of the community. While interviews were initially scheduled to last 20 minutes, the interest and excitement of those being interviewed often necessitated one and even two-hour conversations. Key informants not only shared their perceptions, but also were generous in discussing what they felt library priorities should be, challenges they see in meeting those priorities and the successes and failures of the library in presently serving the local community.
- **Town Hall Meetings** – The Town Hall Meeting format was chosen as an excellent method to gain insights from community leaders and the local residents while building partnerships and goodwill. To capture the diversity of our county, 28 town hall meetings were held; one in each incorporated city or town as well as in the unincorporated areas of Alamo, Byron/Discovery Bay, Crockett, El Sobrante, Kensington, Knightsen, North Richmond, and Rodeo. The Library partnered with local city councils, city managers, and the Board of Supervisors to plan, host and publicize each Town Hall Meeting. Ultimately, these forums were attended by mayors, Board of Supervisors, business owners, community leaders, local service groups, Friends of the Library and Library Foundation members, and other citizens passionate about their community. The questions were kept simple:

what community priorities should the Library be addressing; what could the Library do better; and identify the most important contribution the Library presently makes in their community.

All input from the three research efforts was captured, coded and categorized. In addition to sharing with the planning team, the research findings were shared with all library staff at a series of meetings in November. Additionally, each community library was given a breakout of data specific to their community. With this overwhelming body of information collected, the Library planning team felt a renewed sense of purpose and moved forward on the final development of a strategic plan with the community at its heart.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Armed with rich and detailed input from every sector of the community, the Library planning team revisited their initial vision and goals drafted in the spring prior to community input. A new vision statement was written to reflect the place the Library holds in the minds and hearts of the community – what we call “The Evocative Library.” The revised statement reflects how the Library thinks of itself *and* how the community thinks of the Library.

The goals also required significant amendment and revision to more closely parallel findings from the research. Based on consistent and overwhelming input from the community, a fourth goal was added to ensure better promotion of the library’s programs, value and services. For each goal, a set of measurable objectives were established to provide the Strategic Plan with a solid means of evaluating progress.

Confident in a draft that more appropriately represented the aspirations of the community, the planning committee then set about to develop a menu of strategies and tactics. To achieve this, the committee held a series of all staff meetings to collect insight from employees. With their operational, day-to-day experience, staff played an invaluable role in helping to brainstorm approaches, strategies and specific tactics that could be considered. All of these were collected and shared with the planning committee and individual community libraries as resources to help operationalize and jump-start both the countywide action plan and individual community library service plans.

Following is the formal Strategic Plan that will guide the library over the next three years in prioritizing its resources, manpower, programing and efforts. Mindfully created with the input and direction of the communities the Library serves, the plan will be a powerful tool in tailoring, reshaping and rethinking how library services, facilities and programs support the needs of the community.

**CCC Library
Vision Statement**

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CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN

2014-2017

VISION STATEMENT: Contra Costa County Library is the pulse of our community. Working together, we spark imagination, fuel potential, and connect people with ideas and each other.

The following goals and objectives will shape and direct the library over a three-year period. The strategies shown are suggested approaches and a collection of potential tactics has been developed by library staff to help jump-start planning activities in order to achieve the planned goals and objectives. In every instance, the county and community libraries first priority is to understand and serve the emerging and dynamic needs of the community.

Goal 1: The library ensures easy, equitable access to library services for all Contra Costa County residents.

Objective A: *The library will expand its services to additional identified underserved populations in each community, a minimum of 25 percent.*

Strategy 1: Conduct a community needs assessment.

Strategy 2: Promote library services throughout the county.

Strategy 3: Optimize and develop program offerings.

Strategy 4: Optimize hours at the community level and other service points.

Strategy 5: Develop new funding and partnership approaches.

Strategy 6: Improve access and services for people with disabilities countywide.

Objective B: *Explore and establish three new approaches for improving library hours, facilities and services.*

Strategy 1: Explore opportunities to increase access to off- and supplemental-hour library services.

Strategy 2: Establish countywide facility standards to create a welcoming and inclusive space in each community.

Strategy 3: Establish countywide service standards to clear obstacles and expand access.

Goal 2: The library champions personal and community engagement in literacy and reading to enrich lives.

Objective A: *Increase opportunities for literacy and lifelong learning by a minimum of 25 percent.*

Strategy 1: Maximize participation in Project Second Chance.

Strategy 2: Position and market each library as the community's early literacy center.

Strategy 3: Prioritize and develop programming to attract and retain new users.

Strategy 4: Pilot library programs and services to support educational achievement.

Objective B: *Expand knowledge of collections to increase circulation by a minimum of 10 percent.*

Strategy 1: Develop and execute marketing plan to educate residents and staff on current collection and services.

Strategy 2: Aggressively market the library's digital collection and eBooks.

Goal 3: The library delivers a consistent, high-quality, and inviting experience at all points of contact.

Objective A: *Assess all facilities and develop methods to increase user satisfaction levels by 50 percent.*

Strategy 1: Establish countywide facility standards to create a welcoming and inclusive space in each community

Strategy 2: Create a facility assessment tool and action plan based on countywide standards to be executed by every community library and by an objective assessment team

Strategy 3: Annually assess facility satisfaction levels.

Objective B: *Enact a "pro-access" customer service plan to improve user satisfaction levels by 20 percent.*

Strategy 1: Establish and promote key principles of library customer service.

Strategy 2: Develop consistent and meaningful staff trainings on customer service.

Strategy 3: Review all institutional practices and local workflows to ensure continuity with library principles of customer service.

Strategy 4: Annually assess facility satisfaction levels.

Objective C: *Explore and implement technology to enhance the customer experience.*

Strategy 1: Complete implementation of 80/20 self-service across all community libraries.

Strategy 2: Develop and offer programs and training for staff and users to complement usage of new library technology.

Strategy 3: Annually assess technology satisfaction levels and develop technology responsive to customer needs.

Goal 4: The library successfully promotes its value, programs and opportunities to the community.

Objective A: *Develop and implement a strategic marketing communications plan.*

Strategy 1: Conduct an inventory of library resources available for promotion

Strategy 2: Collect and review other organizations' strategic marketing communications plans

Strategy 3: Identify potential partners/funders to support the library's communications and marketing efforts.

PLAN EXECUTION

This plan outlines the priorities that will guide for Contra Costa County Library over the next three years (2014-2017). The plan outlines a countywide approach to library services that respects strong community ownership of their libraries.

Countywide Efforts: Library administration will be responsible for the overall county plan, using the goals and objectives to help direct resources, staff and programs. The highest priority for the County Library is to align countywide services, trainings and staff to support the community libraries in serving the needs of their communities. Through consistent leadership and attention to the plan's implementation, Library administrators and service sectors can help maximize opportunities, minimize duplication and facilitate rapid implementation of the plan throughout the county.

Community Service Plans: While the overall plan will be applied countywide, each Community Library will be expected to develop individual Community Service Plans tailored to the specific needs and desires of the community, as identified in the research. These plans, developed annually in concert with Library Administration, operationalize the goals and objectives.

Whether an activity is county-led or community library-driven, the end result will be an activity that directly supports the community's expressed need for library services.

PLAN EVALUATION

Each Community Library, as well as each Countywide Service Division, will be responsible for completing an annual assessment. This assessment will serve as a benchmark for planning purposes. Based on this assessment, individual Library Service Plans will be developed for each community annually. Progress will be evaluated at the end of each year in anticipation of developing Library Service Plans for the upcoming year.