STRATEGIC PLAN

FY 2014 – FY 2016
(July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2016)

Contents

Introduction

This plan is intended to provide the Ela Area Public Library a strategic direction for the period between July 2013 and June 2016. It's a standard component of responsible management of the library, and is based on the assumption that we will manage expenses within the current level of funding.

It's not an all-inclusive list of our activities, and isn't intended to be. Rather, it focuses on the priority services and internal initiatives that the library will emphasize.

Our two most valued strengths, as revealed by the community survey we conducted in early 2013, are the expertise of our staff and the comfortable environment of our building: 81% of patrons rated staff assistance and 75% rated comfortable spaces a 9 or 10. These are clearly the two features that our residents value most. We will focus this plan in a way that continues to invest in those high priority areas.

We're confident in our ability to provide excellent resources and services of the traditional sort: books, music, and video in physical formats. We have internal processes that manage that part of our work very well. We also take pride in the many educational and cultural programs that we host for the community. We will continue to heavily invest in these traditional services, as they are in very high demand.

Our library has also been a key community resource for access to technology. For about 20 years, we've provided computers, opportunities to learn basic software applications, and a robust Internet connection for the public. These are also traditional library services at this point.

We're now in an era of rapid technological development. These changes affect our cultural environment and challenge libraries more profoundly than anything since Gutenberg's printing press. We have many residents who eagerly seek new technologies and many who prefer more traditional formats and services. Therein lies our challenge.

As books, typewriters, videos, computers, and websites became central resources of the public library, so too will the new technologies emerging now. While none of us has a crystal ball, it's clear that collaborative and interactive social technologies are likely here to stay.

Changes in popular culture and the demands of our digital economy require new approaches to public library services. The focus of this plan is to help us deliver the kinds of services that will address our community's emerging needs. We will support collaboration, provide access to materials and services that are in high demand, and nurture the technical skills of our residents.

Background

The library last completed a full strategic plan in 2006, which was in effect from FY 2007 – FY 2012.

The board deemed that it was important to create a new plan covering the next three years, July 2013 through June 2016 (FY14-FY16).

Donna E. Fletcher Consulting, Inc., a professional market research and strategic planning facilitator was hired. Ms. Fletcher specializes in creating data-based strategic plans for libraries. Veronda Pitchford, a library consultant, worked with the library managers on the mission statement and future trends. The planning process started in September 2012 and was completed in June 2013.

Approach to Planning

To ensure a thorough and positive planning experience, the library engaged in a collaborative data gathering process with the community, library board and library staff. Activities included:

- Review of 2012 Census Data estimates.
- Twenty in-library interviews among both patrons and non-patrons to understand their usage of the library and its strengths and weaknesses.
- Community Stakeholders focus group to create a SWOT analysis, identify community needs and determine how the library might meet these needs.
- All-staff meeting to create a SWOT analysis, identify potential strategic initiatives and the ideal future library.
- A survey mailed to all residents in the Ela Public Library District to determine the community's usage and perceptions of the library and its interest in potential new services. Completed survey sample was 1,746 from district residents, a 16% response rate.

Community Profile

The total population of the Ela Library District as measured by the U.S. Census Bureau increased from 31,044 in 2000 to 33,621 in 2010 (8.3%). The 2012 estimate is 33,888, +0.8% vs. 2010.

- The median age is 41.4 years.
- District residents have high levels of education, 55% have a bachelors degree or more.
- 54% of households have children under 18.
- Average household income is $146,225.
- The majority of the District is White. 7% are Asian and 7% are of Hispanic origin.

Ela Library District Residents by Age-2012 Estimate
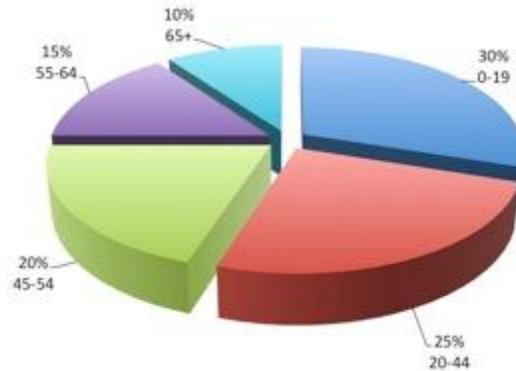
Ela Library District Residents by Ethnicity-2012 Estimate
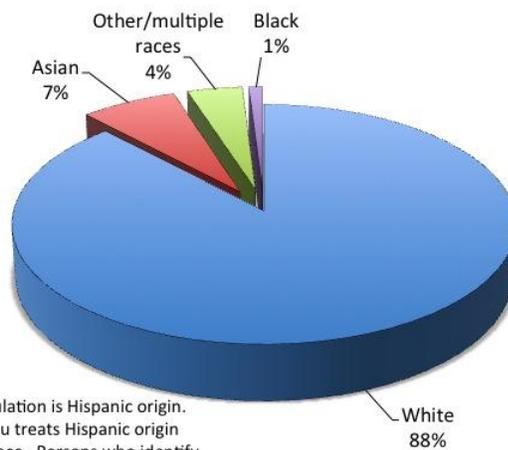
Note: 7% of population is Hispanic origin. The Census Bureau treats Hispanic origin separately from race. Persons who identify themselves as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race, so they are spread across the race categories based on where they identify themselves on the questionnaire.

Budget and Revenue

Our services are almost entirely supported by local property taxes, which account for 96% of our revenue. With an annual operating budget of approximately $5,200,000, only 4% comes from other sources like overdue fines, passport processing fees, photocopy & printing charges, and grants.

Mission Statement

The library managers developed a new mission statement for the library. The Board approved it in July, 2013.

> *We are committed to building a thriving community at the Ela Library: your place for information, innovation, and inspiration.*

Service Initiatives and Internal Initiatives

The plan includes both service and internal initiatives. The service initiatives focus on what the community will receive and how it will benefit. Internal initiatives address the library's infrastructure and operations. These are actions the library needs to pursue in order for the library to provide effective and efficient services.

Service Initiatives: Goals

The goals guide the library's actions in allocating financial resources and staff time. They do not eliminate efforts in other areas, but they receive the most focused attention of all the activities we undertake for the next three years. These goals are based on the data gathered through the patron interviews, stakeholder focus group, staff input session and community survey.

Goals include the identity of the target user, and how that user will benefit from the services identified.

Service Initiatives: Potential Activities

Potential activities are meant to illustrate possible actions the library will complete in order to meet the goals of the plan. These potential activities are not intended to be absolute or inclusive, but rather realistic suggestions that reflect the current library environment. As the environment changes, and more information is discovered during the research phase of each activity, changes are possible. The aim of the activities is to meet the identified goals.

Targets

Targets are the way the library will measure its progress toward reaching goals.

SERVICE INITIATIVES

Goal 1 – Engaging Spaces

Develop spaces that excite our visitors and encourage more library visits.

Potential Activities

- Renovate the children's department to provide different zones for discovery, safe play and study.

- Create a more appealing and engaging space for teens and tweens.

- Increase the library's capability to host small group collaboration.

Targets

- The asset value* of comfortable areas in the library among patrons will rise to at least 74% by FY 2016 from 69% as measured against the 2013 Ela Library community survey.

- The asset value of comfortable areas in the library among patrons with children 0-10 will increase to at least 81% by FY 2016 from 72% as measured against the 2013 Ela Library community survey.

- Teens' satisfaction with space, materials and activities will increase by a statistically significant amount when comparing FY 2015 vs. the in-library teen baseline survey to be conducted in September-October, 2013.

* Asset value is the percent of total patrons who are familiar with the feature and evaluate it highly with a 9 or 10 rating.

Goal 2 – Rethink the catalog

Deliver a better user experience when using online resources.

Potential Activities

- Implement a one-stop search tool for all of the library's resources, both digital and physical.

- Improve content delivery on mobile devices by optimizing the library's website and digital resources for these devices.

- Create a targeted marketing campaign to encourage and instruct patrons to use digital library services.

Targets

- The asset value of ease of finding items in the online catalog among patrons will increase to at least 54% by FY 2016 from 48% as measured against the 2013 Ela Library community survey.

- Awareness among patrons of the library providing current and emerging technology will rise to at least 62% by FY 2016 from 56% as measured against the 2013 Ela Library community survey.

Goal 3 – Technology Enrichment

Nurture the community's experience with new technology.

Potential Activities

- Develop zones and reconfigurable spaces for collaborative work and play with technologies.

- Train staff to be guides for using emerging technologies. All desk staff will be able to teach or mentor at least one type of specialized technology.

- Deliver hands-on workshops for creative and new technology.

Targets

- The asset value of providing current and emerging technology among patrons will increase to at least 46% by FY 2016 from 40% as measured against the 2013 Ela Library community survey.

- By December 2015, at least 200 patrons will participate in a hands-on workshop for creative and new technologies.

Goal 4 – Responsive Collections

Provide resources for the community that are most in demand.

Potential Activities

- Actively monitor, report, and review usage patterns for all types of materials and services.

- Review the marketplace quarterly to discuss potential new services and formats.

- Experiment with different solutions to find the best products for our residents.

Targets

- Develop a new statistical reporting format to capture additional usage and satisfaction levels by July 2014.

Staff Development

Rejuvenate staff development to promote innovation and technical competencies.

- Build a more robust training platform and incorporate technical competencies into annual evaluations by July 1, 2014.

- Create spaces and time for collaborative learning by December 2014.

- Provide Staff assistance where patrons find materials. Offer mobile staff assistance by July 2014.

Internal Operations

Revitalize internal operations to provide opportunities for innovation.

- Annually review services, expenses and workflows to identify and either streamline or eliminate services and/or practices that are unsustainable.

- Create an annual plan during the budget process that will identify the action items in support of the strategic plan.

- By December 2013, evaluate the costs and benefits of our existing ILS consortia commitment and determine whether or not it is in line with our mission and strategic plan.

Board Development

Build a culture on the Board that fosters the skills and knowledge necessary for Trustees to govern a thriving public library.

- Seek opportunities to create growing expertise in core areas of responsibility, including fiscal management, policy development, strategic planning, and public administration.

- Develop a plan for supportive endeavors like fundraising, community partnerships, and advocacy initiatives.