

## Strategic Planning for Results and Planning Responsibilities

Strategic Planning for Results is a planning process developed for libraries:

- **It is community focused.** It begins by asking key community stakeholders to define a vision for the community and to identify what needs to happen to reach that vision. Community needs provide the framework to select library services that meet real needs and contribute to achieving the community vision.
- **It includes eighteen library service responses** that capture the range of services that libraries typically offer. The library selects two to three service responses that correspond to identified community needs; these become the library's service priorities.
- **There is a strong emphasis on measurement and evaluation**, including
  - the number of people who use a service or program;
  - the community's perceptions of the service or program;
  - the number of units of library service delivered (e.g. circulation, programs presented, etc.);
  - the impact of services and programs on individuals' knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviour.
- **It includes strategies for managing change.** Shifting established services and ways of doing things can be difficult and risky for an organization. Preparing for change and transformation is part of this process, as it should be for any planning initiative.

Planning Responsibilities:

- The Community Planning Committee, the library board, and library staff all play a role in Strategic Planning for Results.
- The Community Planning Committee is most active at the beginning of the process, by assessing community needs and determining which needs best correlate to new or existing library services.
- The library board and staff are most active later in the process, selecting library service responses and developing goals and objectives to put the service responses into action.

## The Essence of Community-Based Planning

The *Strategic Planning for Results* process is community and service oriented. It guides you through the steps of **focusing library services on your community's needs**.

The premise of the process is to help libraries discover, implement and communicate what makes them excellent within their community. The process believes:

- excellence must be defined locally;
- excellence is possible for both small and large libraries;
- excellence is a moving target, and must be continually maintained.

On a very broad scale, the process involves 4 elements:

1. **Start with an understanding of what the community needs** – this is sometimes a surprise to the library undertaking the process, and may result in a library changing its priorities (how the budget is allocated, how staff is trained, what programs are offered, etc.). If your library is not meeting your community's needs, it is not of value. The greater the value you can demonstrate, the more support you will be able to generate from stakeholders (council, patrons, the community, funders, etc.).
2. **Determine what needs the library can fill** – based on an assessment of community needs, which roles **can** the library fill, and what roles **should** you fill? (Which needs are appropriate for the library to address? Which needs are being filled by other groups?) *Strategic Planning for Results* means starting with community needs rather than the library's desires: "It's about them, not us."
3. **Pick Service Responses that meet the needs** – once you've determined which of the community needs the library should address, each need is matched with one of 18 possible service responses. A Library Service Response is what a library does for, or offers to, the public in an effort to meet their needs. When the municipality is measuring the value of the library it will be able to say, our library provides a venue to 'Stimulate Imagination' in our community; instead of, 'it lends books' or not knowing at all what the library does. The more valuable you are, the easier it will be to make the case for financial support.
4. **Implement and measure service responses** – obviously planning is just the first step (even though there are many steps involved in the planning). The real test is implementing the plan and measuring your results. *Strategic Planning for Results* provides you with a blueprint to carry out and evaluate your plan. You set measurable goals (how your community will benefit from your services), provide specific objectives (the way the library will measure its progress toward reaching a goal), detail the activities that you are going to implement, and allocate the resources needed (staff, collections, facilities, technology).