2022-2027 Strategic Plan

Prepared by

Perpetual Movement to Results

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Messages from the Chair of the Library Board and the Library Director

The Library Board is very proud of the value that the Central Rappahannock Regional Library and CRRL staff bring to our communities and of the work that the Board engages in with the library to ensure library policies and budgets support CRRL's mission. This Strategic Plan serves as a guiding star for that work, and we look forward to helping the library achieve the progress and innovation the plan maps out.

Diana Risavi
Chair, Library Board of Trustees

The library's mission of inspiring lifelong learning for everyone in our community and our vision of improving lives through the transformative power of information, learning, and ideas come together in our Strategic Plan. This tool will inform how we do the important work of making CRRL even more valuable, inclusive, and empowering for years to come. I would like to thank the Board, staff, customers, and partners who contributed their ideas, hopes, and feedback for the formulation of this plan, and the consultant who synthesized all of that valuable input into this Strategic Plan.

Martha Hutzel
Library Director

CENTRAL REGIONAL RAPPAHANOCK LIBRARY

Serving the City of Fredericksburg and the Counties of Stafford, Spotsylvania and Westmoreland.

Executive Summary

After an extensive data-gathering effort, which sought to collect the voices of its valued and diverse stakeholders, Central Rappahannock Regional Library (CRRL) has finalized its 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. Though much has changed in the world and community since the dissemination of CRRL's last Strategic Plan, one thing has remained constant, and that is CRRL's *commitment to inspire and provide access to lifelong learning for everyone in our community*. The information collected through this strategic planning process helped inform the ways in which CRRL will continue to inspire the community and provide that access.

CRRL selected C Parker Consulting (CPC) – experts in strategic planning - to facilitate the process. The pages that follow in this Executive Summary outline the various components of the strategic planning process and the outcomes informed through that process, including:

- Purpose of the Strategic Plan
- Data-Gathering Activities
- Core Themes
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis
- Strategic Priorities

Vision

The Central Rappahannock Regional Library improves lives through the transformative power of information, learning and ideas to meet the growing needs of our region.

Mission

Inspiring lifelong learning for everyone in our region.

Values

- Learning
- Adaptability
- Accountability
- Community
- Inclusion

Purpose of the Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan's purpose is to guide CRRL in creating accessible and relevant resources, materials, and services for its diverse community now and during the next five years. Though the mission and vision are unchanged, this plan captures the innovative, community-centric ways CRRL will provide service and value as it moves into the future.
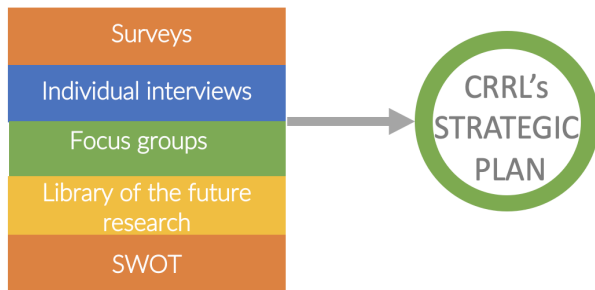
Data Gathering

CPC conducted three audience-specific surveys including customers, community partners, and employees, and a total of 377 individuals responded. Additionally, CPC interviewed staff and Board members and led several focus groups comprised of staff, managers, and customers. Once the data were gathered, CPC analyzed interview, focus group, and survey results independently using content analysis and coding. The analyses were then compared to identify core themes as well as key distinctions. An environmental scan was also conducted, which involved researching other libraries in the nation to identify best practices related to the "library of the future."

From there, CPC created a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis. The SWOT analysis – combined with survey, interview, and focus group data, as well as the library research – informed the key strategic priorities and related goals and objectives.

Core Themes from Data Gathering

Surveys
Individual interviews
Focus groups
Library of the future research
SWOT

→ CRRL's STRATEGIC PLAN

> CRRL strives to provide a wide variety of programs to meet community needs and interests. The library system welcomes and encourages individuals and groups to use their facilities in far greater ways than just being a place to check out books to read. A far cry from the library of yesteryear!

Through the thousands of quantitative and qualitative data points gathered, clear core themes emerged and are categorized in four summary areas: general, cautions for the future due to discrepancies in the data, ongoing challenges that will likely continue to impact CRRL in the near-term, and library of the future themes.

NOTE: As a preface to the categorized summary themes, it must be noted that as a result of the data gathered from a diverse range of stakeholders, it became overwhelmingly clear that CRRL's appreciation of and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging needed to be captured as a core value. As such, "Inclusion" has replaced "Communication" as one of CRRL's five core values.

General themes:
1. Across all groups surveyed, **respondents rated favorably CRRL's delivery on its mission,** CRRL's **value of services for a diverse community**, and the extent to which CRRL is seen as an **educational institution for the entire community**. The average responses on a scale from 0 to 100, with 100 being the best, were 77, 76, and 68 respectively.
2. The most commonly mentioned **strengths include: the staff's customer service excellence; welcoming environment; variety of services, programs, and resources; and community centricity.**
3. When asked what they **most appreciate** about CRRL, respondents noted: **variety of services**, with technology services and free services noted the most; **learning resources and opportunities**, and the **lifelong learning mission; community outreach, connection and involvement**; and the **welcoming environment and staff.**
4. When asked **what the community will need more of in the future**, the results were generally unanimous across all data types and populations: **outreach, marketing, and increased awareness; expanded services, access and resources** for ESL populations, the aging community, and those with disabilities; **technological innovation; better use of**

space; and **ongoing staff development** to ensure they can meet the future needs of the community.

5. When asked **what the community will need less of in the future**, respondents listed physical materials such as audiobooks**, music CDs, and DVDs.**

6. Community partners and staff were invited to share specific ideas or suggestions that, if implemented, would likely result in **CRRL having an even greater positive impact in the community in the future**; in addition to the aforementioned "future needs" themes, **increased partnerships and engaging staff in ideation** were noted.

Cautions for the future:

1. While the majority of employees, community partners, and customers – collectively - expressed a desire for CRRL to avoid censorship and focus on diversity and inclusion in their materials and offerings, 16 of the responding customers expressed a strong desire for more "traditional" materials; While CRRL has a robust policy regarding censorship, **CRRL would also benefit from creating a clear stand about censorship.**

2. There were hundreds of positive comments about the importance of diversity and inclusion, the very diverse population within the community, and the safe space CRRL provides, yet there was a lack of diversity among customer survey respondents: only 6% of survey respondents are non-White, 15% chose not to report ethnicity, and 62% have no children living at home; CRRL will need to affirm whether these survey demographics are representative of the community it serves and desires to serve and will want to **explore how greater outreach may enable them to reach a more diverse population.**

> More and more, people need community. Anything that enhances belonging and identity will help our communities.

3. There are a number of **distinctions between minority respondents' views and the entire survey population's views,** again pointing to **CRRL's opportunity to collect the voices of a more diverse population.**

4. **Almost 84% of respondents indicated that they would borrow physical materials** (the most commonly selected service or product out of a long list of options) **in the next five years;** however, **73 respondents mentioned through qualitative comments that physical books would be less needed in the future;** this **data point disparity – though not extreme - will need to be explored as CRRL considers its future materials.**

Ongoing challenges:

1. **Dramatic decrease of resources and economic unpredictability**; this is a theme that has been ongoing and will likely continue into the future, thereby calling on CRRL to determine how to thrive despite the challenge

2. **Budget and staffing impacted by COVID,** the repercussions of which are likely to last well into the future
3. **Ingenuity/innovation are funding dependent**; here again, funding is a key driver in CRRL's ability to innovate, and innovation is one of the themes that is important to data respondents

Library of the future

Through extensive research that aimed to answer the question: *What will libraries look like in the future, and how can CRRL move into that future vision?,* four key points emerged.

1. **Equip and enable staff** to meet the growing need to be technologically savvy and culturally competent
2. **Use space creatively** to focus on promoting social engagement, age-specific "play," and digitized rooms so that more users can be reached
3. Explore how to **capture "Big Data"** supported by **artificial intelligence.**
    *   To expand further, "Big Data" - simply stated - is a whole lot of data. In a library setting, big data comes from many sources, such as transaction processing systems, customer databases, internet clickstream logs, mobile apps, and social networks. Libraries often use Big Data to optimize their collections, increase users' experience, better utilize space, evaluate programs/services, provide information to their users, etc. "Big Data" must also protect customers' personal/checkout information.
4. Continue to **innovate materials, resources, and services**

SWOT Analysis

Data collection and analysis yielded the following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis.

S

*   Dedicated staff who are appreciated by customers
*   Customer-centricity
*   Stellar service
*   Mission for lifelong learning
*   Welcoming environment
*   Wide range of services, programs, and resources

W

*   Portions of the community are not being reached
*   Traditional outreach and marketing efforts
*   Lack of staff development in digitization and virtual librarianship
*   Lack of resources due to locality budget cuts for four consecutive years

O

*   Engage staff more in innovating and planning
*   Increase special services/ programming (ex. ESL)
*   Diversify outreach and marketing efforts
*   Expand partnerships
*   Consider ways to maximize physical space

T

*   Rapidly evolving technology
*   Users' evolving needs
*   Disproportionate pressure from pro-censorship members
*   Lack of stand regarding censorship of CRRL materials.
*   Unpredictable economy

Key Strategic Priorities

The comprehensive data collection and analysis informed five key strategic priorities and related goals and objectives. The strategic priorities include:
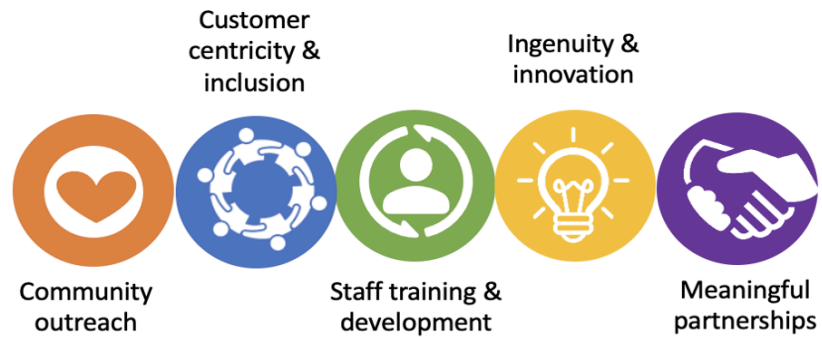
1. Community outreach: Expand marketing, awareness-building, and outreach as a means of reaching and engaging CRRL's diverse population.
2. Customer centricity and inclusion: Ensure a diverse offering of stellar programs, resources, and services aimed at creating a culture of inclusion and meeting customers' needs.
3. Staff training and development: Ensure staff are equipped, enabled, and empowered to serve our community as CRRL becomes a library of the future.
4. Ingenuity and innovation: Use internal and external resources, knowledge, insights, and inspiration to constantly reimagine what's possible as a Library of the Future.
5. Meaningful partnerships: Nurture and expand existing partnerships that support the community's needs.

------End of Executive Summary -----

Vision

The Central Rappahannock Regional Library improves lives through the transformative power of information, learning and ideas to meet the growing needs of our region.

Mission

Inspiring lifelong learning for everyone in our region.

Values

- **Learning** – we promote learning and literacy in all forms
- **Inclusion –** we are committed to maintaining a culture where diversity is celebrated and everyone is included
- **Adaptability** – we are agile and responsive while making resources and services available to all
- **Accountability** – we serve as a responsible steward of public resources and trust
- **Community** – we provide opportunities to meet, exchange ideas, and participate in the life of our customers

Strategic Priority Goals & Objectives

Community Outreach
Expand marketing, awareness building, and outreach as a means of reaching and engaging CRRL's diverse population.

Goal 1: Increase library usage and engagement among four identified underserved populations: individuals experiencing homelessness, teens, those in rural communities, and English as a second language (ESL) individuals.

Customer Centricity & Inclusion
Offer diverse and stellar programs, resources, and services aimed at creating a culture of inclusion and meeting customers' needs.

Goal 1: Increase materials in the collection that reflect the community, including ESL resources offered to the community.

Goal 2: Determine which programming needs (in-branch and outreach) are most important to our community.

Goal 3: Focus on functionality of services on customer needs and expectations.

Goal 4: Continue to prioritize diverse hiring and cultural awareness/sensitivity within CRRL's existing diverse workforce.

Staff Training & Development
Ensure staff are equipped, enabled, and empowered to serve our community as CRRL becomes a library of the future.

Goal 1: Develop a plan that would provide at least one opportunity per year for each employee to shadow a different area of CRRL as a means of increasing awareness and development.

Goal 2: Provide each employee with the opportunity to attend at least two external professional development opportunities each year that are specific to their role, professional goals, and interests.

Goal 3: Provide staff quarterly opportunities to share library trends, professional development experiences and otherwise continue to emphasize the importance of and commitment to employee growth.

Ingenuity & Innovation
Use internal and external resources, knowledge, insights, and inspiration to constantly reimagine what's possible as a Library of the Future.

Goal 1: Host employee mastermind sessions to engage staff in discussing current innovation and brainstorming new innovative ways of meeting customers' needs.

Goal 2: Expand CRRL's digital and non-traditional collections.

Goal 3: Innovatively use space to meet the community's growing needs.

Meaningful partnerships
Nurture and expand existing partnerships that support the community's needs.

Goal 1: Develop a plan for cultivating new and existing partnerships with organizations, businesses, and agencies in our community that align with our mission in support of the community.

Goal 2: Execute the plan for cultivating new and existing partnerships by a minimum of two new or renewed partnerships.