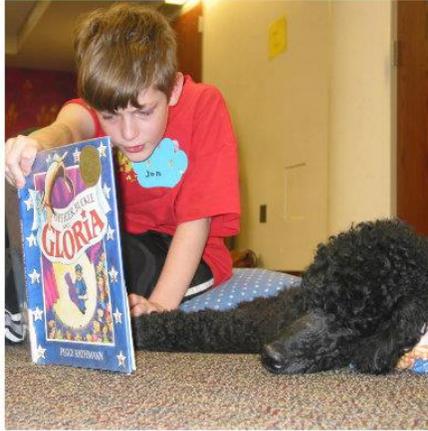


Strategic Planning Process for The Urbana Free Library

December 6, 2018



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Introduction

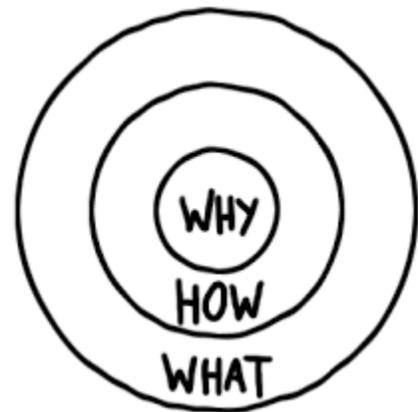
The Urbana Free Library's (TUFL) last strategic plan expired in 2016. Since that time, the Library has operated with annual plans to guide activities while, managing several major facility projects and working to become fully staffed after several retirements. With new staff in place and the Board ready to go, it's the perfect time to engage in a new strategic planning process.

A strong strategic plan sets direction for the Library, outlining goals and a way to measure success. The strategic plan is a tool for communicating with the community about the Library's priorities over the next three years. Staff will use the strategic plan to inform annual activity plans which guide day-to-day decisions. The plan will also include key metrics to show progress towards goals and how to share success.

This process will help us develop a plan that is useable and includes a graphical component (a one-page plan) to inspire connection with the Library by the Board, staff, and community. The one-page plan will serve as a clear guide about the Library's strategic direction at a glance.

To ground our process, we'll use:

- Simon Sinek's "Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action" to guide the overall strategic planning process. (TED talk [here](#).) Sinek's model (*Why? How? What?*) helps process participants focus on the key elements of the plan that will make it cohesive and useable. The Board, informed by community input, develops the overall vision and mission (the *Why?*) and the strategic directions (the *How?*). Staff focus on solidifying goals and action steps that will meet those goals (the *What?*). This connects all elements of the plan so everyone is clear what we are working towards during the life of the plan.
- Systems thinking philosophy from "[The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization](#)" by Peter M. Senge. The Board's role in the planning process is to connect Library functions at a higher level, a systems level. The Board will use learning organization methods and work to understand how various Library components work together and where tension exists. The Board will consider these system aspects when developing vision, mission, and strategic directions, thus laying the groundwork for staff to use their strengths to develop the remainder of the plan (goals, activities, and metrics). With regular reports to the Board after plan implementation, we can make adjustments to the strategy and celebrate successes.
- Elements of "[The Performance Imperative: A Framework for Social Sector Excellence](#)" developed by the Leap of Reason Ambassadors Community. This framework guides best practices that lead to meaningful, measurable change. The seven pillars of high performance organizations will help the Library deliver, over a prolonged period of time, sustainable results and impact in the community.



It's an exciting time for TUFL! By June 2019, we'll have a new strategic plan to guide our work over the next three years. We know we improve the quality of life for people in our community and we are excited about the opportunity to create deeper impact by becoming more strategic and uniting behind a strong vision.

Process Summary

TUFL is in an excellent position to engage in strategic planning. With several new staff members in place, it's the perfect time to reflect, celebrate success, and start planning for what's next. TUFL can take stock of what's working, as well as how to grow and evolve to more deeply connect with the community and partners. To that end, this proposed learning-focused strategic planning process will result in a clear, adaptive plan for TUFL that is grounded in the Library's strengths, streamline decision-making, and focus on impact.

This proposal is organized into three phases:

LEARN: Core to the planning process is learning. Learning requires information gathering, dialogue, and analysis. A considerable amount of time is devoted to learning during this process to help participants deeply connect with all things TUFL. A Planning Team (up to 7 members selected from the Board and staff by the Executive Director) will guide the process with Amanda Standerfer serving as the process facilitator. By gathering community input through surveys, focus groups, and interviews, this plan will move beyond statistics and allow the creation of stories centered on impact. We will look for strengths and connections to help staff and the Board consider TUFL's role in new ways. While Library essentials will remain the same, in many ways this planning process offers a blank slate. We hope to help planning participants see beyond the current state and consider *what is possible* in new ways.

DREAM: Sometimes the way forward is not clear, even messy, and data gathered to inform the strategic direction can be overwhelming. The Planning Team's role is to make sense of the data and guide learning for the staff and Board through a Learning Report. During this phase, the Board will reflect on the learning and dream about the future during retreat sessions. By trusting the planning process, connection with the plan's strategic direction will emerge, and the results will lead to transformation.

DO: Finally, the plan will start to take shape, and the Planning Team will spend time during this phase of the process reviewing documents and graphics that make the plan come to life. The Planning Team will develop an activity plan that will guide implementation over the life of the plan and help TUFL think about the plan's narrative and milestones. We'll also develop an evaluation framework and reporting process to communicate success to stakeholders. When the plan is complete, the excitement generated during the planning process will carry over to implementation and focused energy for the life of the plan will extend throughout the community.

The Planning Team will meet at the beginning of each phase to keep the process moving forward. The Board members from the Planning Team will report on progress at each Board meeting until the new plan is approved. The Board and staff will have multiple opportunities to give input and shape the plan's direction. After community input in the Learn phase, we'll use social media to give updates on plan progress and get input from key stakeholders on drafts of the final plan.

This is an adaptive process with regular check-ins ensuring accountability and progress, considering ways to maximize community and stakeholder participation. The final product is a comprehensive, outcome-focused strategic plan (one-page graphical version and complete written plan) and a recommended activity plan draft with a reporting structure. Committing to this process and way of operating will require clear communication and buy-in from staff and the Board. The results will unify and energize all involved!

Strategic Plan Overview / Summary of Deliverables

What	Purpose
<p>One-page Graphical Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level graphical version of the strategic plan. • Quick reference for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vision ○ Mission ○ Strategic Directions ○ Goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For communication about strategic direction. • Use in office (and as a poster), on website, and in publications. • Use in Board reports as reminder of high-level strategy. • Use in staff areas as reminder of high-level strategy. • Use with the community in publications and at meetings as a reminder of high-level strategy.
<p>Strategic Plan Document (Board approved)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the expanded, more traditional text-heavy strategic planning document for Board approval. • It provides additional context and detail about the planning process and other plan components. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use on website as the “full plan” for anyone to review.
<p>Activity Plan Draft</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an operating document for staff use when planning annual activities that will help meet the plan goals. • Includes timeline for implementation. • This document can also be used for internal updates/reports. • This document changes and is updated annually by staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff use this document to detail annual activities and accomplishments. • Can also be used to set individual performance goals.
<p>Evaluation Framework and Report Template</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evaluation framework details metrics for each goal and is aligned with the Activity Plan. • The report template provides a dashboard and form for showing plan progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff use the evaluation framework to guide data collection. • Regular progress reports are developed to communicate progress to stakeholders and the community.

Work Plan

Phase I: LEARN

During this phase, the Executive Director will convene a Planning Team (up to 7 members from the Board and staff) to serve as the process guides. Planning Team members will meet regularly to review process progress, give input on process elements, and react to draft plan documents. The first step in the process is to gather community and stakeholder input. The Planning Team will gather internal and external documents related to the process for review and discussion (Library data, Director reports, community needs reports, strategic plans from other community organizations, strategic plans from similar libraries, etc.).

Gathering stakeholder feedback is key to understanding TUFL's current state and potential future direction. The Planning Team will help develop a survey to get input on:

1. **Awareness of Library Services** – How aware are respondents of the various library services? Where do they learn about what's going on at the Library? (Benchmarked for future evaluations.)
2. **Value and Satisfaction** – What aspects of TUFL's work do respondents value the most? Are they satisfied with TUFL's work? (Benchmarked for future evaluations.)
3. **Community Needs** – What's happening in the community? How might the Library address these needs?
4. **Future Focus** – What's important going forward? What are TUFL's strengths? How should TUFL measure success?
5. **Other relevant questions** – Operating hours? Facilities? TBD by the Planning Team

After the community survey, we will hold several focus groups (volunteers recruited through the survey) to dig deeper into survey responses (up to 12 people at each session). The Planning Team will develop the focus group agenda and we will engage a facilitator to conduct the sessions. For one of the focus groups, we'll hold a Community Leaders Breakfast with community stakeholders and partners (larger group of 30+). In addition, the facilitator will conduct a series of interviews with other key stakeholders as identified by the Planning Team.

To get Board input during this phase, we will conduct a survey to ask about what's working, what needs improvement, and opportunities for the future. Board members will have the opportunity to respond to structured and open response questions.

Staff will also meet for a brief planning session during the annual in-service day. During this session, we'll ask staff to identify Library strengths and opportunities to consider for the future. Staff will have another opportunity to give input at department-level meetings later in the process once the Board has set the vision, mission, and strategic directions.

At the end of this phase, the Planning Team will produce a Learning Report summarizing the information gathered and the findings that will ground the Board retreat in the next phase.

Deliverables:	Finalized planning process timeline with meeting dates. Learning Report that includes analysis and findings from information gathered/reviewed, survey, focus groups, and interviews. Regular check-ins with Planning Team.
Timeframe:	January – March 2019

Phase II: DREAM

During this phase, we'll share the Learning Report with the Board and hold a retreat to dream about the future. During the retreat, we'll get the Board up to speed on the planning process, conduct an environmental scan and SWOT analysis, review and update the vision and mission, and affirm strategic directions. We'll use our time to critically think about what's most important for TUFL and set priorities.

After the Board determines the core plan elements, Library staff will meet in each department to brainstorm activities that will help achieve plan goals. These sessions will inform the annual activity plans.

It's important that everyone feel engaged at the retreat and department staff meetings, and that their perspectives are expressed and respected, so the facilitation will be flexible to accommodate for multiple input methods. At the end of the sessions, participants will feel confident that TUFL is on the right track for transformative change.



Deliverables:	Board retreat and department staff meetings. Regular check-ins with Planning Team.
Timeframe:	March – April 2019

Phase III: DO

In this phase, we'll draft and revise the various plan documents. The Planning Team will review and edit the drafts. In addition, we will share the drafts with key stakeholders for feedback.

In May, we'll present the draft plan documents to the Board for final comment/revisions. This session will allow the Board to clarify next steps and discuss an implementation and communication strategy for the plan.

After the Board session, we will make revisions and present final plan documents for approval.

Deliverables:	All draft plan documents by May Board meeting. Final plan documents by June Board meeting. Regular check-ins with Library Director.
Timeframe:	May – June 2019

Process Timeline

Phase I: LEARN		
Goal: To finalize the planning process and receive community/stakeholder feedback that will inform the strategic planning process.		
What	Who	When/Duration
Planning Team Kick-Off Meeting: Review process and timeline, discuss information gathering needs, and initial information gathering.	Planning Team	January 2019
Community Survey Development and Administration: Develop survey instrument and refine with Planning Team. Administer and monitor survey with Planning Team assistance with link distribution (Survey Monkey).	Planning Team	February 2019
Board survey: Develop survey instrument for Board input and refine with Planning Team. Administer and monitor survey.	Amanda with assistance from Planning Team	February 2019
Focus Groups and Community Leaders Breakfast: Conduct focus groups with selected survey respondents/community members, develop focus group questions, review agenda with Planning Team, compile notes.	Facilitator with Planning Team input	February-March 2019
Stakeholder interviews: Conduct interviews with key stakeholders identified by Planning Team.	Facilitator with Planning Team input	February-March 2019
Staff Session at In-Service Day: Staff focus group to give input into the planning process.	Amanda	February 2019
Learning Report: Develop report that analyzes and synthesizes all information gathered (including Library and community data).	Planning Team	March 2019

Phase II: DREAM		
Goal: To report learning to the Board and staff and get their input into the plan via retreats.		
<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>When/Duration</u>
Planning Team Meeting: Review Learning Report, debrief staff session, plan for Board retreat.	Amanda and Planning Team	March 2019
Board Retreat Meeting: Session with Board to review learning and to develop strategic plan elements.	Amanda	April 2019
Department-level Staff Meetings: Facilitated meetings to reflect on the strategic plan elements developed by the Board and to give input into the activity plan.	Amanda	April 2019

Phase III: DO		
Goal: To develop and refine all plan documents, develop activity plan aligned with evaluation framework, design reporting documents, and prepare for plan approval.		
<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>When/Duration</u>
Planning Team Meeting: Debrief Board retreat information and review strategic plan outline documents.	Amanda and Planning Team	April 2019
Document Development: Develop graphical and written plan, Activity Plan, Evaluation Framework, and report template.	Planning Team	April-May 2019
Board Meeting: Meet with Board to review all plan documents and make final revisions.	Planning Team with Board	May-June 2019