Saskatchewan Public Library Governance

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT MODULE

Why is planning important?

Planning is important for libraries of all sizes. It takes time and energy to develop a plan and follow through on identified goals, but the process will lead to innovation and improvement.

Getting started:

➤ Review the library's mandate
➤ Initiate a Community Needs Assessment
➤ Develop an Action Plan
➤ Report on results

What is a Community Needs Assessment?

A Community Needs Assessment gathers information about a community's opinions, needs, challenges and assets.

➤ Study the community, not the library.

➤ The purpose is to consider new ways of being.

It is **NOT**:

➤ opinions on library operations.
➤ a list of things patrons want at the library.
➤ a list of things the library wants/needs.
➤ a library services satisfaction survey.

Review the library's mandate:

Review the library's policies and relevant legislation. Saskatchewan's Public Library Regulations outline the following as:

Basic library services
For the purposes of clause 2(a) of the Act, the following library services are basic library services:

(a) the provision of a level of service determined locally at the community level, including:
　(i) providing individuals with access to library resources through home access, publicly accessible computers, local branch libraries, area resource libraries and regional resource centres;
　(ii) providing that a minimum base level of service is available provincially to ensure access to public libraries' resources and catalogued collections;
　(iii) providing public access to local and union catalogues through the province-wide library electronic network;
　(iv) participating in the development of electronic information access as a method of delivering reference and information services;
　(v) making materials available to the public through direct lending, reciprocal borrowing, interlibrary loans and various types of home delivery;
　(vi) providing appropriately qualified and trained staff to assist the public to use library resources and services; and
　(vii) developing a Saskatchewan universal public library card to link the individual to the system;

(b) the development of library collections according to the needs and interests of communities, including:

　(i) the designing, by each library system, of a process and method for evaluating and assessing local needs on an ongoing basis;
　(ii) the organizing, cataloguing and classifying of those collections; and
　(iii) maintaining catalogues of information resources and making them accessible to all Saskatchewan residents; and

(c) the development of programs that meet local needs for cultural, economic, educational and recreational information organized around the themes of:

　(i) promoting and raising the awareness of library resources;
　(ii) increasing information competencies;
　(iii) exploring and discovering new ideas; and
　(iv) advocating library values.

Public Libraries Regulations, 1996, RRS c P-39.2 Reg. 1

Why do a Community Needs Assessment?

► The public library must adapt to the changing world inside and outside of its doors.

► Understanding the community is a significant step toward building relevant and inclusive libraries.

► The library will use information from the needs assessment to help position itself to meet the needs of the community.

► A Community Needs Assessment can assist the library with the following:
- advocacy
- fundraising
- articulating our purpose
- evaluating our impact
- future planning
- becoming more customer centric

What does a Community Needs Assessment look like?

► Map the community using the following information:
  ► Reports, statistics and studies
  ► Trends
  ► Local planning documents
  ► Community focal points
  ► Available services and programs
  ► Community facilities and infrastructure

► Use one or more of the following methods to gather information:
  ► Focus groups
  ► Community meetings
  ► Personal interviews
  ► Online surveys
  ► Mail surveys
  ► Phone surveys

► Develop an action plan that determines how the library will adapt to the community's needs. Consider:
  ► Collections
  ► Programs
  ► Services
  ► Outreach
  ► Sustainability
  ► Facilities
  ► Promotions
  ► Partnerships
  ► Open hours

How can we start a Community Needs Assessment?

1. Secure support and buy-in from library board.
2. Map the community.
3. Meet with board and branch staff.
4. Gather information from the community.
5. Meet with board and branch staff to share results of information gathering.
6. Develop an action plan.
7. Assess the success.

Benefits of planning

► It clarifies the purpose of the library.
► It demonstrates accountability to funding organizations.
► It establishes priorities for spending.
► It increases efficiency of service.
► It increases responsiveness to the library's customers.
► It provides a basis for measuring the success of the library.
► it provides expectations on which to evaluate the performance of the library director.
► It identifies opportunities for the future.

Moore, Mary Y. *The Successful Library Trustee Handbook.* Chicago: American Library Association, 2010.

Acknowledgements:

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Action Plan:

Set achievable, measurable goals based on information gathered during the Needs Assessment.

Additional tools and examples within this module:

► Appendix A: Presentation to local board
► Appendix B: Interview questions for community leaders
► Appendix C: Tips for writing an Action Plan
► Appendix D: Sample Action Plan
► Appendix E: Prairie Lily Public Library Community Needs Assessment example

What will make your Community Needs Assessment successful?

► Secure the support and understanding of library staff and board members.
► Do your research. Evaluate needs assessments from other jurisdictions and decide what method would work best in your area.
► Set time limits.
► Only ask for information you can't get anywhere else.
► Only ask for information that you can do something about.

► Ask questions that build on your "hunches" in order to probe them more in depth.
► Know how you will support the results.
► Develop an action plan with goals, activities and an established timeline.
► Evaluate the success of the action plan.

Measuring success:

► The Community Needs Assessment process helps identify local relationships and partnership opportunities in the community.
► In addition to reporting on outputs such as any increases in circulation, program attendance, or open hours, consider reporting on outcomes achieved.
► Ask community members to comment on what impact the change in library service or addition to library programming has had on them.