



Strategic Plan FY2022 – FY2024

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

[Lake Villa District Library](#) is located in the Village of Lindenhurst in northern Lake County and serves a population of approximately 40,000 in Lake Villa Township, which includes the communities of Lake Villa, Lindenhurst, along with portions of Round Lake Beach, Round Lake Heights, and Antioch. The library opened a new 66,000 square foot building in 2019 at 140 N. Munn Road in Lindenhurst adjacent to Crooked Lake.

In January 2021, we formed a Planning Team to guide the strategic planning process with the goal of establishing a way forward for the library as we continue to move through the COVID-19 global pandemic. Amanda E. Standerfer, a consultant from [Fast Forward Libraries](#), facilitated our planning process. We would like to acknowledge the members of the Planning Team and thank them for their dedication to this process during a challenging time. Planning Team members included:

- Tara Caldara, Head of Adult Services
- Lynn M. Firman, Head of Circulation
- Elisa Gueffier, Head of Youth Services
- Mikael Jacobsen, Library Director
- Nina Kenney, Head of Communications
- Doug Nieman, Trustee
- Terrance O'Brien, Trustee
- Anita Santoro, Head of Technical Services

We spent a great deal of time during this process gathering community feedback in order to ground our future plans in community needs and desires. During the initial phase of our planning process we:

- Met with the Board and staff members to conduct an environmental scan and SOAR analysis (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results);
- Collected feedback from the Board and staff members via a survey;
- Conducted a community survey;
- Held in-person and virtual focus groups;
- Interviewed community stakeholders;
- Reviewed library and demographic data; and
- Browsed strategic plans from other community organizations.

We collected all this data into a Learning Report, which appears as the appendix to this plan document.

The second phase of our planning process consisted of a series of retreat sessions with Board and staff members. It was during these sessions that the elements of this plan began to emerge and we spent time brainstorming and discussing how to align current library services and activities with the aspirations we hope to achieve in the community, along with dreaming about future initiatives. We were intentional to consider current possibilities and post-pandemic opportunities, knowing that we would need to bridge these two points as we navigate the uncertain next steps.

Finally, the Planning Team brought together plan elements into this document for the Board to review, refine, and approve. We know that this plan is just the first step in operating in a more strategic way and that we will need to consider how to transition from planning to implementation. Additional implementation details can be found in the Next Steps section at the end of this document.

CHALLENGES WE FACE

The uncertainty of the last year has presented many challenges. While some of these challenges are ongoing, others are ones we can intentionally address through our strategic plan.

- **COVID-19 global pandemic:** The pandemic has significantly impacted all aspects of the library and will continue to do so in a variety of ways. Community input during this process mostly supported how the library handled their response to the rapidly evolving situation starting in March 2020, and many expressed a desire to “get back to normal.” We will continue to balance staff and community safety as informed by local, state, and regional health officials as we move forward with implementation of this plan.
- **Increasing awareness of all the library offers:** We know that we are only one of many, many community organizations and businesses vying for the attention of our community members. As expected, during this process, we heard from our “super users,” but not many infrequent or non-users. We know that the library enjoys strong community support, and we seek to translate that into strong community usage through the implementation of this plan. As we come to a post-pandemic time, we hope to not only reintroduce our community to our beautiful building and outdoor spaces, but also be more present in places where the community gathers.
- **Responding to community interests and needs:** Again, we are a small voice in a host of competing interests when it comes to getting the attention of our community members. Our competitive advantage is that we are strongly patron-focused and can use this plan to be nimble in how we work towards plan goals to achieve our aspirations. In other words, we can use this plan to communicate with our community in new ways and try things to increase their connection to the library and each other.

THE WAY FORWARD: OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION

A lifetime of learning, growth, and connection.

Our vision states the desired future we hope to achieve in the community if we effectively carry out our mission. This is a memorable vision that builds on our tagline – *Connecting people*. We hope our vision inspires community members to use and support the library clearly stating what the community gains by having a public library.

MISSION

We enrich lives by connecting people with resources, services, spaces, and each other.

Our mission states how we will carry out our work in order to achieve our vision. The mission guides the work of the library and communicates with the community about what they can expect from the library. We've again used a concise, memorable statement to provide focus to library activities.

The following pages include additional details for each area of aspiration. We've organized our plan a bit differently from a traditional strategic plan by using the following components:

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| Aspiration: | The impact we want to have in our community. |
| Goal: | The focus of our work that will help us realize our aspiration. |
| Tactics: | The key areas we will work in to attain our goal, supported by an activity plan to guide plan implementation (developed by staff after adoption of the strategic plan). |
| Awareness Focus: | The way we will communicate and engage with our community to increase awareness about the library and all it offers. |
| Organizational Development Focus: | The internal focus to support staff work for each aspiration. |

ASPIRATION: CONNECTED & ENGAGED

GOAL: We cultivate meaningful relationships resulting in a strong connection to the library, between community members, and with community partners.

Relationships form the basis for the connection with the library. Our aspiration is to strengthen those connections and deepen engagement to achieve greater impact in the lives of community members. We know from the community feedback obtained through our planning process that the relationships people have with staff members make their experience using the library special. People want to be part of a place where they feel valued, so the tactics to achieve this goal focus on the building blocks of relationship building.

| TACTICS: | POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES: |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We purposefully and actively embed ourselves in the community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase a library outreach vehicle and establish a plan to reach all areas of the community Use “calls to action” at outreach events to track community engagement |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We boldly invest in relationships. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use readers’ / viewers’ advisory to get to know patrons and their reading/viewing interests Cross-promote library services/programs at service desks |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We collaborate generously and strategically with community-focused groups and organizations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold annual conversations with partners to plan collaborative activities Establish list of potential partners and discuss mutual interests Seek ways to enhance and expand collaboration with local schools |
| <p>Awareness Focus: We use stories to evoke an emotional connection with community members.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create directed marketing pieces that communicate with underserved and non-user community members |
| <p>Organizational Development Focus: We nurture our spirit of service.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop core service standards Review/update values statement |

Possible measures of success:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrons report high levels of satisfaction Collective-impact on community-wide issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community values the library Observation of multi-generational library use |
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ASPIRATION: CURIOUS & CREATIVE

GOAL: We enrich lives and inspire lifelong discovery through engaging people with our collections, technology, and learning experiences.

Our collections, programs, and access to technology make us a valued community resource. We have something for everyone at every stage of life – whether it’s for entertainment, to achieve educational goals, or just to learn something new.

From community feedback obtained during this process, we know there is a strong desire to provide opportunities for people to flex their creative muscles.

| TACTICS: | POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES: |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We expand literacy, knowledge, and worldview. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woven collection promotion – displays, social media, bookmarks, etc. Expanded reading challenges |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We inspire the pursuit of lifelong discovery. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs featuring community speakers Intentionally increase diversity, depth, and breadth of programs, presenters, and topics Experiential learning spaces and opportunities Host more local and traveling exhibits |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We emphasize digital confidence and technology skills. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek new ways to support community members when using technology – classes, discussions groups, one-on-one, etc. Establish digital media studio to expand technology access |
| <p>Awareness Focus: We have established feedback loops to evolve and respond to community needs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service desks regularly solicit and report community feedback Increase feedback opportunities on social media |
| <p>Organizational Development Focus: We are a learning organization that uses data for decision-making.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a cross-training program Establish a succession plan Annual Board evaluation assessment |

Possible measures of success:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased circulation Increased program attendance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrons report confidence using technology High levels of staff and Board satisfaction |
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ASPIRATION: WELCOMING & INCLUSIVE

GOAL: We are a community haven.

We strive to be a haven for our community – a place of safety and refuge. We know this is important in an increasingly chaotic world, and we embrace this role in our community. We are a place to meet, experience belonging, and find joy.

| TACTICS: | POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES: |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have vibrant and inviting spaces to gather and connect. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced outdoor spaces and trails that connect to other community spaces Invitations to community groups to use meeting room spaces |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We welcome everyone warmly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct patron journey mapping to inform possible new signage in additional languages Invite community members to curate displays and share recommendations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We delight our community with memorable experiences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community groups to create events with community-wide impact |
| <p>Awareness Focus: We ambitiously and intentionally reach all community members.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop engagement funnels for various community groups Use curated newsletters to reach new community groups |
| <p>Organizational Development Focus: We have a compelling team dynamic.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase team-building and social opportunities Plan for impact of minimum wage increase |

| Possible measures of success: | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased meeting room usage Patrons report feeling welcome Increase in cardholders Increase in awareness of what the library offers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrons report feeling represented and engaged Board and staff members report feeling like part of a team |

NEXT STEPS

After this plan is adopted by the Board in June 2021, staff will complete the activity plan to guide implementation. Implementation is a continual process, as the timing of certain activities will be determined by priority and influenced by the timing and completion of the building project. Review and adjustment of the activity plan will happen on a regular basis.

Evaluation of the plan will be ongoing once the plan implementation is underway. The Planning Team will meet a final time to review and discuss an evaluation framework that will inform what success looks like as the library implements this plan. Measurements for each goal will vary, and some activities will be best evaluated by collecting data through patron and community surveys. Other activities will be evaluated based on information collected in-house such as circulation and usage statistics, program participation, and social media data. Some goals will be met by creating deliverables, like plans for outreach and engagement. Continued reporting of successes and challenges will ensure that the library is transparent about progress and open to input.

The library commits to a comprehensive review and update of this plan at its completion. This plan will move LVDL significantly forward in guiding next steps on plans for a more robust library presence in the community, stronger connections with community members, and increased opportunities for individuals to learn and grow. This plan is an investment in the future of the library as a growing asset of the overall community.