



# STRATEGIC PLANNING for results

A Plan of Service (Strategic Plan) is a road map that helps determine where your library is going. The planning process helps set priorities; there is not enough money to do everything. The planning process should be done fairly quickly so that you can get on with the “doing.”

The *Planning for Results* process is community based and runs on three assumptions:

1. Excellence must be defined locally – it results when library services match community needs, interests, and priorities.
2. Excellence is possible for all libraries of any size – it rests more on commitment than on unlimited resources.
3. Excellence is a moving target – even when achieved, excellence must be continually maintained.

## KEY POINTS

### Community Based Planning

1. Start by asking a few prominent community members (such as the school principal, a town councilor, etc.) to help with your planning process. Make sure you choose these people carefully – choose individuals that *represent* the various communities that your library serves. Involving members of your community will help you to determine your community’s needs.
2. Work together to answer the question: “What can the library do to meet these needs?”  
Remember: Your library is only valuable if it meets the needs of the communities you serve.

### Library Service Priorities

3. *Planning for Results* includes 18 public library service responses – choose the 2 – 3 service responses that match the community needs identified in your needs assessment process.
4. Choosing service responses that match community needs ensures that resources are used to provide the services that matter most in your community. Be sure to prioritize your selected service responses to determine what is most important to your community.

### Measures of Progress

5. Convert service responses into goals and objectives.
  - Goal: the benefit your community (or a target population within your community) will receive because the library provides a specific service response.
  - Objective: the way the library will measure its progress towards reaching a goal.
6. Measure the success of your objectives. There are four categories of measurement:
  - Number of people who use a service or program
  - Users’ perceptions of the service or program
  - The difference the service or program makes in the user’s knowledge, skill, attitude, behavior, or condition

- Number of units of library service delivered (circulation, number of programs presented, etc.)

## Managing Change

7. Use the results of the planning process to reshape the services and programs offered by the library.
8. Focus on the positive to ensure that staff can easily adjust to proposed changes.

## Tips for creating a successful Plan of Service using *Strategic Planning for Results*:

- Choose a facilitator to manage the process (choose someone neutral).
- Have the meeting date determined when contacting community members – it makes it easier for them to say “yes.”
- There should be few enough service responses that your staff and board can say them all.
- When you write your Mission Statement, make sure that is short enough so that staff and board can remember it.
- The final product should be: clear, concise, credible, logical and persuasive.
- Follow through with your Plan – do what you said you would do, make the changes you said you would make, and communicate the plan to members of your community.
- Carrying out this process will ensure that your library is at the heart of your community.

## Next Steps:

1. Check out: **Nelson, Sandra. Strategic Planning for Results (Chicago: American Library Association, 2008).**
2. Develop a timeline for the planning process.
3. Decide who will take part in the planning process (library manager, board members, community members). PRL consultants are available for assistance. Please keep them informed along the way.
4. Gather and review information for your needs assessment process (such as municipal planning documents, community/library statistical data, community needs assessment documents, municipal websites, etc.).
5. Schedule and carry out your planning meeting. Write the Plan.
6. Communicate and follow through on your Plan. Present it to council, provide attractive brochures for the public, post on your website, submit an article to your local newspaper or newsletter and send it to your regional library system.

