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The mission of the Portage Lake District Library is to inspire our diverse community to discover, imagine and connect.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Portage Lake District Library began work on the 2019-2021 strategic plan in March 2018. A committee was formed, made up of members of the PLDL Board, staff, Friends of the Library, and community members. A community survey that asked users to rate current services and submit ideas for future programs and resources was filled out by nearly 200 community members. Focus groups hosted by strategic planning committee members collected additional insight into library services from senior citizens, teens, teachers, families, and adults without children.

Over the next several months, the committee worked to identify common themes from the survey results and focus group conversations. Those commonalities laid the groundwork for three strategic initiatives identified in this plan: Discover, Imagine, and Connect. Each initiative details a number of goals that are meant to improve our collections, enhance the user’s experience, and increase opportunities for community connection and engagement.

This plan is an ambitious set of improvements and innovations that represent a renewed commitment to exceptional service at the library. Many of the goals listed ask the library to commit further to patron-and data-driven decision making. These commitments will ensure that services and resources at PLDL represent the diverse wants and needs of our community. PLDL has long been a community anchor for educational and recreational materials and engagement, and we’re thrilled to have a community-informed strategic plan to drive this necessary work.

Dillon Geshel, Library Director
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Jennifer Donovan, Library Board President  
Lora Repp, Library Board Secretary  
Emily Raffaelli, Friends of the Library Member  
Shannon Healy, Community Member  
Susan Burack, Community Member  
Susan Autio, Circulation Supervisor  
Jennifer Miller, Business Manager  
Dillon Geshel, Library Director

LIBRARY STAFF

Dillon Geshel, Library Director  
Jennifer Miller, Business Manager  
Susan Autio, Circulation Supervisor  
Andra Ziemnick, InterLibrary Loan Specialist  
Michael Stanitis, Program Coordinator  
Leonard Schwandt, Building Specialist  
Rachele Lambert, Library Assistant  
Nancy Svacina, Library Assistant  
Holly Nemiroff, Library Assistant  
Peggy Larson, Library Assistant  
Catie Gardner, Library Assistant  
Mia Brodeur, Library Page  
Kellan Heikkila, Library Page  
Sarah Eles, Substitute Library Assistant  
Anna Leppanen, Substitute Library Assistant  
Ellie Alexander, Substitute Library Assistant  
Richard Strang, Substitute Maintenance

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jennifer Donovan, President  
Joan Suits, Vice President  
Tom Suchenek, Treasurer  
Lora Repp, Secretary  
Robert Kinnunen, Trustee  
Sylvia Matthews, Trustee  
Christopher Archer, Trustee
2019 —2022 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Considering input from the Houghton/Keweenaw community, the library staff and members of the Strategic Planning Committee will focus on improvements and innovations in the following key areas:

1. Discover
   
   Strategic Initiative: Through virtual and physical collections, PLDL will provide patrons with the materials needed for engagement, education, and inspiration.

2. Imagine
   
   Strategic Initiative: PLDL will facilitate experiences that engage, educate, and inspire individuals of all ages and backgrounds, and create flexible spaces that are welcoming, easy to navigate, and appropriate for a wide range of activities and community interactions.

3. Connect
   
   Strategic Initiative: PLDL will engage community partners, volunteers, and staff to maximize the library’s impact as a community resource, information center, and meeting place.
Discover

Through virtual and physical collections, PLDL will provide patrons with the materials needed for engagement, education, and inspiration. This process requires a balance between providing the library’s patrons with materials, while also utilizing staff expertise to help patrons explore new genres, formats, and ideas.

**Goal #1:** PLDL will provide a diverse collection to patrons

**Success Measurements:**
- Materials provided are up-to-date and reflect a larger range of viewpoints
- The number of formats available increased

**Activities:**
- Review and evaluate all collections in terms of organization, materials, formats, ease of access, and diversity
- Expand the options provided, in both format and variety
- Evaluate the process as needed for acquiring new materials

**Impact:**
- Patrons become life-long learners and have access to a diverse range of materials

**Goal #2:** PLDL will highlight specific collections relevant to time of year and community events

**Success Measurements:**
- The number of collaborative displays increased
- Collection displays were regularly updated and kept current

**Activities:**
- Promote local and cultural holidays and history
- Provide local organizations an opportunity to use the display spaces on a rotating bases to publicize their activities and services
- Ensure displays and promoted collections are relevant to library and community happenings

**Impact:**
- Patrons and community members feel recognized. Their support of the Library is increased, and our local partnerships are strengthened
Discover

**Goal #3:** PLDL will create collections responsive to community input

**Success Measurements:**
- Increased circulation
- Increased use of materials within the library
- When surveyed, patrons indicated that materials were more accessible

**Activities:**
- Survey patrons on additions or changes to collections and services and provide on-going methods for patrons to make collection suggestions
- Work with community groups to determine common needs, and provide materials based on those needs

**Impact:**
- Collections are accessible and relevant. The decisions we make are patron-driven
Imagine

PLDL will facilitate experiences that engage, educate, and inspire individuals of all ages and backgrounds, and create flexible spaces that are welcoming, easy to navigate, and appropriate for a wide range of activities and community interactions. This process will require creating more flexible areas that enable the library to adapt quickly to users throughout the day for various activities.

**Goal #1:** PLDL will offer diverse, interactive, and community focused programs

**Success Measurements:**
- Program attendance increased
- Programs presented address a wide range of topics
- Programs were rated favorably by a majority of attendees

**Activities:**
- Host programs presented by community experts
- Increase the scope and variety of programs offered
- Develop a program evaluation survey to be completed by program attendees

**Impact:** There is more participation in Library programs and events, and attendees are expanding their knowledge and broadening their horizons

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**Goal #2:** PLDL will offer flexible spaces to meet community and patron needs

**Success Measurements:**
- Increased space was created to meet individual and group needs
- Space was rated favorably by patrons and community groups

**Activities:**
- Establish more meeting and quiet spaces in the library
- Share space with community partners
- Utilize outdoor space adjacent to the library

**Impact:** Spaces available respond to a variety of needs, enabling patrons and community members to feel welcome at the Library
Connect

PLDL will engage community partners, volunteers, and staff to maximize the library’s impact as a community resource, information center, and meeting place. The library will better publicize and promote available resources and improve wayfinding signage throughout the building.

Goal #1: PLDL will improve technology assistance for library patrons

Success Measurements:

- When surveyed, patrons rated the use of self-service printing favorably
- When surveyed, staff and patrons rated technology assistance as helpful and effective

Activities

- Implement self-service printing in coordination with the Superiorland Library Cooperative
- Create instructional signage to assist patrons and staff with self-service printing
- Train circulation staff to use self-service printing
- Hire a library assistant who will assist with technology reference and IT work as well as provide training to staff and patrons

Impact: Patrons are independently printing materials, allowing staff more time for other duties. PLDL staff possess increased technology skills and are easily able to access technology support.

Goal #2: PLDL will ensure a consistent and exceptional customer service experience for all patrons

Success Measurements:

- Survey results indicated that staff feel better prepared and more confident in providing high quality service to patrons and visitors to the library
- When surveyed, patrons responded favorably to self-service checkout and provided useful feedback regarding the system

Activities

- Develop a customer service plan that details PLDL’s commitment to excellent service
- Create a staff development program that enables staff to manage challenging situations
- Provide staff with training in assisting patrons with special needs
- Provide self-checkout kiosks

Impact: Library patrons experience an excellent level of customer service, and PLDL staff feel confident in the provision of this service. Utilization of self-service checkout provides convenience for patrons and allows staff to have more time for other duties.
Goal #3: PLDL will connect with partners to promote mutually beneficial community activities

Success Measurements:

- New partnerships were established with schools and universities
- Relationships were developed between PLDL, local businesses, and community service agencies or organizations

Activities

- Partner with schools, local businesses, and other community agencies and organizations
- Reach out to senior citizens and area students
- Collaborate with Friends of the Library

Impact: More community members of all ages, schools, and local businesses and organizations are engaged with the library

Goal #4: PLDL will develop an engaging volunteer program that benefits the library

Success Measurements:

- New tasks were identified for volunteers
- More students began volunteering in the library
- More volunteers worked in the library

Activities

- Recruit more volunteers of all ages
- Develop engaging tasks for volunteers
- Survey volunteers and staff regularly to determine volunteer interests and concerns

Impact: More community members are engaged with the library, and staff have more time to work with patrons on higher-level tasks
Goal #5: PLDL will share information that communicates a clear identity and is easily accessible to library patrons and the community

Success Measurements:

- A single email list was created with a sign-up sheet at the circulation desk
- A separate bulletin board for library programs and information was set up
- New informational signs were put up throughout the library
- Patrons surveyed about website navigability rated it favorably
- A comprehensive social media plan was developed
- Publicity about the library increased in local media

Activities

- Merge email lists to send library events and announcements
- Improve signage throughout the building
- Develop regular orientations to library services
- Improve website navigation
- Create a more active social media presence
- Establish a bulletin board dedicated to library information
- Publicize services available to non-members
- Work on branding the library by promoting a clear, consistent identity

Impact: Through clear communication and orientation programs, patrons and the community will be more comfortable and informed using library services
What Comes Next?

Over the course of the next three years, the activities of this strategic plan will be carried out with support from Library staff, Board and Friends members, and community volunteers. The Library Director and Board of Trustees will periodically assess our progress toward our success measurements and course correct as needed. The evaluation process will be guided by the goals and success measurements outlined in this plan.

Some success measurements include patron surveys, and that data will also be reviewed while evaluating our progress as we work to reach our goals. Our new strategic plan is set to expire in early 2022, and by that time work will begin on a new strategic plan initiative.

The success of this plan is in large part dependent on our community’s willingness to participate. If you have an interest in volunteering at the library, joining the Friends of the Library group, hosting a public program, or new partnership opportunities, we would love to hear from you. Stop by the Library, contact us by phone at 906-482-4570, or reach out via email at info@pldl.org.

You can find a printable version of our strategic plan at www.pldl.org

Dillon Geshel, Library Director