Rutherford County Library System

Long Range Plan

FY 2016-2021

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Executive Summary

Beginning in January 2016, a community-based steering committee met and helped develop a five-year strategic plan for the Rutherford County Library System. A library staff team provided input and feedback to the community steering committee throughout the process. The final plan is a combination of ideas and effort by the community steering committee, the library staff team, and library consultant Dr. Robert Burgin.

Mission Statement

Empowering our community to Read, Connect, Explore, and Share.

Library Areas of Focus and Goals

Reading ➯ **READ**

Goal 1:   Children in Rutherford County will be ready to learn by the time they enter school.

Goal 2:   Teens in Rutherford County will be exposed to the pleasure of reading.

Goal 3:   Adults in Rutherford County will be provided with opportunities to become life-long readers.

Technology ⟹ CONNECT

Goal 1:   The residents of Rutherford County will have access to technologies that enable them to learn and grow.

Goal 2:   The residents of Rutherford County will be confident using technologies.

Exploration ⟹ EXPLORE

Goal 1:   The residents of Rutherford County will have access to resources to explore and express their creativity.

Goal 2:   The residents of Rutherford County will have access to tools for informed decision making.

Community ⟹ SHARE

Goal 1:   The residents of Rutherford County will have a central source for information about the wide variety of resources and organizations in the community.

Goal 2:   The residents of Rutherford County will see the library as a community partner.

Goal 3:   The residents of Rutherford County will see the library as a hub of community activity.

Introduction

Motivation for Planning

In June 2015, the Rutherford County Library System received a federally funded LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) grant to conduct a community needs assessment as part of a larger project to develop a strategic plan for the library.

The library was motivated to engage in a strategic planning process after gaining a new library director after 32 years. The library did not currently have a strategic plan in place.

The Planning Process

The planning process used by the Rutherford County Library System was developed by the State Library of North Carolina to encourage public libraries to define their services in light of the needs of the individual communities being served. The publication on which the State Library's process was partly based, *Strategic Planning for Results,* was specifically written for small and medium sized public libraries and emphasizes a streamlined, community-based approach to planning.

The planning process used by the Rutherford County Library System is based on the assumption that excellence must be defined locally and that excellence results when library services match user needs, interests, and priorities. Consequently, the planning process asked community stakeholders to identify the needs of the community served by the library and the ways in which the library can best meet those needs. The process also included a survey of the residents of Rutherford County, to which a total of 484 individuals responded.

Participants

The community stakeholders for the Rutherford County Library System's planning process formed the library's community steering committee. This committee included:

Jeanette Bryant	Steven Seyboldt
Deborah Bumgarner	Sarah Toney
James Edwards	Shirley Toney
Ronald Kelly	Penny Watkins
Peggy Pruitt	Bonnie Worcester
Elaine Scruggs	

A staff planning team, made up of members of the staff of the Rutherford County Library System, was also involved in the planning process. The staff planning team included:

Stephanie Long	Joy Sharp
Kenneth Odom	April Young

The Rutherford County Library System's planning process was facilitated by Dr. Robert Burgin, a library consultant with more than 40 years of experience in library education, library consulting, and library administration.

Community Needs Assessment

The consultant provided the library's community steering committee with a community needs assessment, based on demographic data for Rutherford County, library usage and funding data, surveys of county residents and library staff, focus groups, meetings, and interviews with local community leaders.

The demographic data for Rutherford County reflected the fact that the county has a more ethnically homogenous population than the rest of the state and a high rate of unemployment. Demographic trends showed that the level of education for county residents is improving as a whole but the percentage of young people is decreasing at a faster rate than for the state and the population growth is slower than the rest of the state.

Library data showed that the Rutherford County Library System's resources are relatively well used but the library is poorly funded and understaffed, relative to other county libraries in North Carolina. Over the past the years, usage of the Rutherford County Library System has increased more than they have for the average county library in the state. While the Rutherford County Library System falls short in 11 of 17 measures examined, the library is much more efficient than the average county library in the state.

A survey of county residents found strong support for library staff. A large percentage of respondents rated the library as excellent in meeting their needs and in customer services. The greatest number of suggested improvements was related to longer hours, facilities, and adult programs.

A survey of library staff found that those individuals consider books for children, internet access computers, books for adults, free Wi-Fi, and DVDs to be the most important library services.

Focus groups, interviews with community leaders, and other meetings found strong support for and made recommendations related to adult programs, children's services, computers and internet access, facilities, and staff.

The library's community steering committee used the community needs assessment to recommend five areas of focus for the library's strategic plan. The identified areas of focus for the Rutherford County Library System:

Emergent Literacy (Create Young Readers)

Learn to Read and Write (Adult, Teen, and Family Literacy)

Connect to the Online World (Public Internet Access)

Information Fluency (How to Find, Evaluate, and Use Information)

Explore and Know Our Community (Community Resources and Services)

The library staff planning team then discussed the identified areas of focus and created one word summaries of the five areas of focus. The staff team reduced the number of areas of focus from five to four, merging Emergent Literacy and Learn to Read and Write as well as merging Connect to the Online World and Information Fluency and then adding Explore in response to some issues raised by the community team. The staff team then drafted goals and objectives for each one word summary, and these were reviewed and approved by the community steering committee.

These are listed below, along with a new mission statement for the library, which the staff drafted and the library board approved.

Mission Statement

Based on the discussions of the Rutherford County Library System's community steering committee and the community needs assessment, the staff planning team created the following new mission statement for the Rutherford County Library System.

Empowering our community to Read, Connect, Explore, and Share.

Areas of Focus, Goals, and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the Rutherford County Library System support the areas of focus that were developed and approved by the community steering committee and staff planning team. Each goal implies that the target audience will achieve the stated benefits *with the assistance of the library*.

Library Areas of Focus and Goals

Reading 〰⬜⟹ **READ**

Goal 1:   *Children in Rutherford County will be ready to learn by the time they enter school.*

Objective 1.1:   Countywide, at least fifty children will participate in the "1000 Books before   Kindergarten" program during 2016-2017.

Objective 1.2:   The number of children participating in the "1000 Books before Kindergarten" program will increase by 5 children per year after the first year.

Goal 2:   *Teens in Rutherford County will be exposed to the pleasure of reading.*

Objective 2.1:   By June 2017, all libraries will have a teen club.

Objective 2.2:   By June 2018, circulation to teens will increase by 5%.

Objective 2.3:   Circulation to teens will continue to increase by an additional 2% per year after the first year of the plan.

Goal 3:   *Adults in Rutherford County will be provided with opportunities to become life-long readers.*

Objective 3.1:   Each year of the plan, all libraries will participate in the State Library's Adult Summer Reading Program.

Objective 3.2:   The number of adults participating in the Adult Summer Reading Program will increase by 5 adults per year after the first year.

Objective 3.3:   By June 2021, the library will investigate and assist in the establishment of a Literacy Council for Rutherford County.

Activities:

- Promote "1000 Books before Kindergarten" at all three libraries
- Record the number of children participating in "1000 Books before Kindergarten" each year
- Form teen clubs at Mountains and Haynes branches and continue Teen Tech Thursdays at Rutherford County Library
- Promote reading through teen clubs
- Focus on collection development in the Young Adult section at all three libraries
- Plan Adult Summer Reading events at all three libraries
- Engage interest of community partners
- Concentrate more on marketing efforts
- Provide books to Rutherford County Senior Meal-Sites
- Provide books for all ages to six "Little Libraries"

Technology ⟶ **CONNECT**

Goal 1:   *The residents of Rutherford County will have access to technologies that enable them to learn and grow.*

Objective 1.1:   By June 2021, the library will implement ways to increase privacy on the public computers.

Objective 1.2:   By June 2021, the library will meet the state average for public internet workstations per 5000 people served.

Goal 2:   *The residents of Rutherford County will be confident using technologies.*

Objective 2.1:   Every year of the plan, every library will provide at least one computer class per month.

Objective 2.2:   In 2016-2017, 150 individuals will attend computer classes at the library.

Objective 2.3:   Between 2017-2018 and 2020-2021, computer class attendance will increase by 2% per year.

Objective 2.4:   By June 2017, the library will investigate and implement at least one new technology for children at each library.

Activities:

- Research cost of dividers to place between public computer stations
- Work toward meeting State average by including the additional number of workstations in the yearly County IT budget requests

- Begin teaching computer classes at the Haynes Branch and continue to teach at least monthly classes at Mountains Branch and Rutherford County Library
- Record the number of participants in each class and report totals on the yearly State Report
- Monitor participation in classes and adjust course offerings to meet new needs
- Research and request funding for children's literacy computers and tablets for all three libraries either through grants or County funds

Exploration **EXPLORE**

Goal 1: *The residents of Rutherford County will have access to resources to explore and express their creativity.*

Objective 1.1: Each month of the plan, each library will sponsor at least two programs that address creativity.

Objective 1.2: Each month of the plan, 75 individuals countywide will participate in library programs that address creativity.

Goal 2: *The residents of Rutherford County will have access to tools for informed decision making.*

Objective 2.1: Each quarter of the plan, each library will offer at least one program on health, financial literacy, or other topic related to life decisions.

Objective 2.2: Each quarter of the plan, at least 30 people countywide will attend programs on health, financial literacy, or other topic related to life decisions county-wide.

Activities:

- Offer programs: Maker-Monday, Adult Coloring, Crafternoon, Teen Tech Thursday, Middle School Makers, special craft programs for all ages, Book Clubs, Genealogy Groups, Creative Contests
- Track participation in programs and events
- Continue to plan programs with partner organizations like Pisgah Legal on topics such as the healthcare laws and money management
- Promote the use of NCLIVE for topics related to life decisions

Community ▯▯⟶ **SHARE**

Goal 1:   *The residents of Rutherford County will have a central source for information about the wide variety of resources and organizations in the community.*

Objective 1.1:   By the end of 2017, the library will create a listing of organizations in the community.

Objective 1.2:   The listing of organizations will be updated semi-annually.

Goal 2:   *The residents of Rutherford County will see the library as a community partner.*

Objective 2.1:   By the end of 2017, the library will initiate partnerships with two key community organizations.

Objective 2.2:   Each subsequent year of the plan, the library will initiate a partnership with one additional key community organization.

Goal 3:   *The residents of Rutherford County will see the library as a hub of community activity.*

Objective 3.1:   By the end of 2017, the Headquarters library will extend its hours of operation on Saturday and one day during the week.

Objective 3.2:   By the end of 2017, the Mountains Branch will extend its hours of operation on Saturday.

Objective 3.3:   By June 2021, the Headquarters Library will expand its main facility based on the needs identified in the 2007 Space Needs Study.

Activities:

- Compile and maintain an updated list of organizations in the county
- Provide books to Rutherford County Senior Meal-Sites
- Provide books for all ages to six "Little Libraries"
- Identify and contact two or more organizations that would be valuable partners for the library
- Identify potential partners on an on-going basis
- Determine if additional personnel or funding is needed to increase hours and gain approval from appropriate governing bodies
- Seek approval to change operating hours from appropriate governing bodies
- Seek the support of governing officials and key partners for additional space