LIBRARY SYSTEM
OF Lancaster County

Comprehensive Plan

2024 – 2030

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Welcome

A sustainable path forward and an equity lens for all.

In a world of rapid change, which will only accelerate over the course of this plan, we're focused on both a bold vision and a practical approach.

As an organization that supports all Lancaster County public libraries, our members count on our strength and continuity. Our communities rely on us to lead the way during challenging times. And our commitment to the mission calls us to look across the county to identify those most in need of access to resources and services.

Our libraries contribute to a healthy economic and social fabric in Lancaster County that benefits all residents. We have ambitious dreams for how that impact can continue and grow. We also recognize the trepidation about the future, given that many of our libraries face significant funding challenges year after year, forcing them to fundraise as much as 75% of their annual budgets.

Together, we've been involved in library leadership in Pennsylvania for more than 30 years. The actions we take today must chart the path towards that growing impact to 2030 and beyond. We envision a future of courage and collaboration among the many individuals and parties who are critical to the work ahead. The people of Lancaster County are counting on us. Let's dive in!

Karla Trout, *Executive Director*
Library System of Lancaster County

Dale Hamby, *President of the Board*
Library System of Lancaster County

Our Mission

LIBRARY SYSTEM
OF **Lancaster County**

We maximize the power of libraries to enhance people's lives.

We do this by:

- Providing operational support
- Facilitating cooperation
- Achieving economies of scale
- Taking a big-picture view

Our Values

Openness
We are transparent and collaborative.

Adaptability
We are responsive to aspirations.

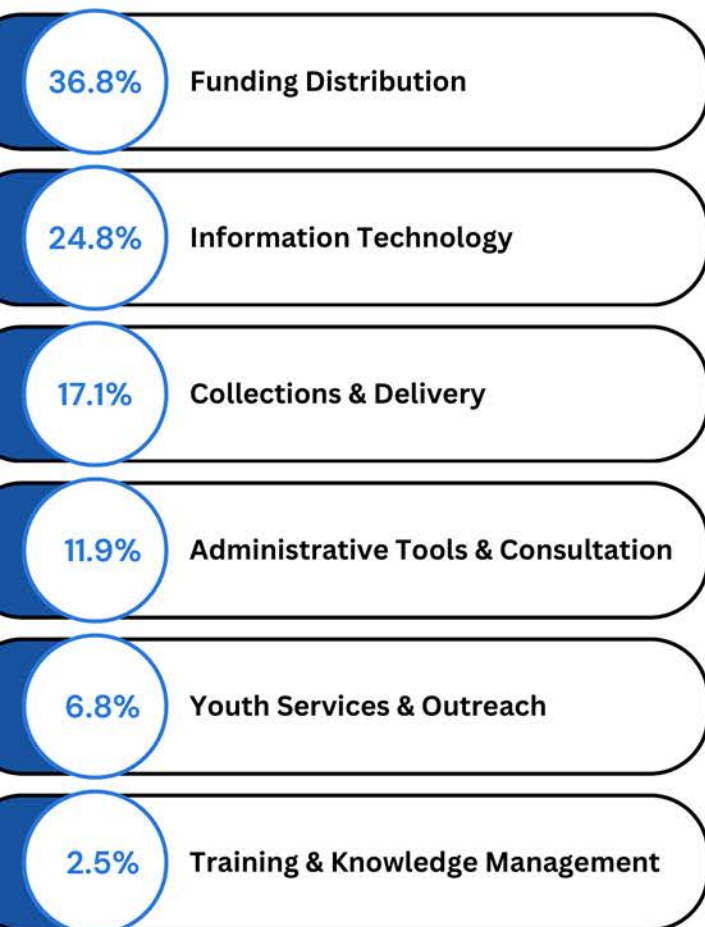## Reliability
We always answer the call.

About Our Organization

Across the nation, Pennsylvania, and even jurisdictions within Pennsylvania take very different approaches to how public library service is structured, funded, and delivered.

In Lancaster PA, the Library System of Lancaster County (LSLC) – a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization – administers a portfolio of services for fourteen member libraries with autonomous operations. LSLC's annual budget is approximately $2.6 million. It distributes an additional $1.9 million in state and county funding directly to members to help sustain their operations. In 2022, the combined budgets of all entities to provide public library service in Lancaster County was $11 million.

Pennsylvania is divided into 29 library districts. The purpose of the districts is to provide equity of access and support library development. LSLC became an interim district library on July 1, 2021 and was permanently designated on July 1, 2022. In this new role, LSLC assumed responsibility for delivery, sorting, interlibrary loan, and an enhanced focus on training.

Funds to Member Libraries

36.8%	**Funding Distribution**
24.8%	**Information Technology**
17.1%	**Collections & Delivery**
11.9%	**Administrative Tools & Consultation**
6.8%	**Youth Services & Outreach**
2.5%	**Training & Knowledge Management**

Lancaster County is located in southeastern Pennsylvania and is the 12th largest of the state's 67 counties by land area with 984 square miles and the 6th largest by population with 556,629 residents. There is a wide-ranging geography from urban to rural across the county.

Current State in 2024

As we listened and learned from staff and stakeholders, several key themes emerged:

Rising Costs – Information Technology and Collections & Delivery functions experienced double-digit percentage increases to critical services in 2023. LSLC absorbs cost increases from other areas of the budget.

Risks Associated With IT – Given the critical role of LSLC IT services, rapid innovations in the marketplace, and local recruitment constraints, the path forward must enable proactive planning, innovation, and creativity.

Consultation and Thought Partnership – LSLC staff identified this as a growth area with benefits to increasing their role. For library directors, every place where LSLC can save resources (both time and money) directly relieves their ongoing pressures around staff and budget. This service also supports smart collective decision–making, which builds trust and facilitates good customer experiences.

Collaboration Among Member Libraries – In the current financial picture, the pie is not big enough for all fourteen libraries to adequately serve their communities. With that reality, LSLC is most effective when it nurtures areas to cooperate instead of compete. LSLC primarily leads by influence rather than formal authority, which requires an additional level of interpersonal skill and the ability to make a strong, compelling case.
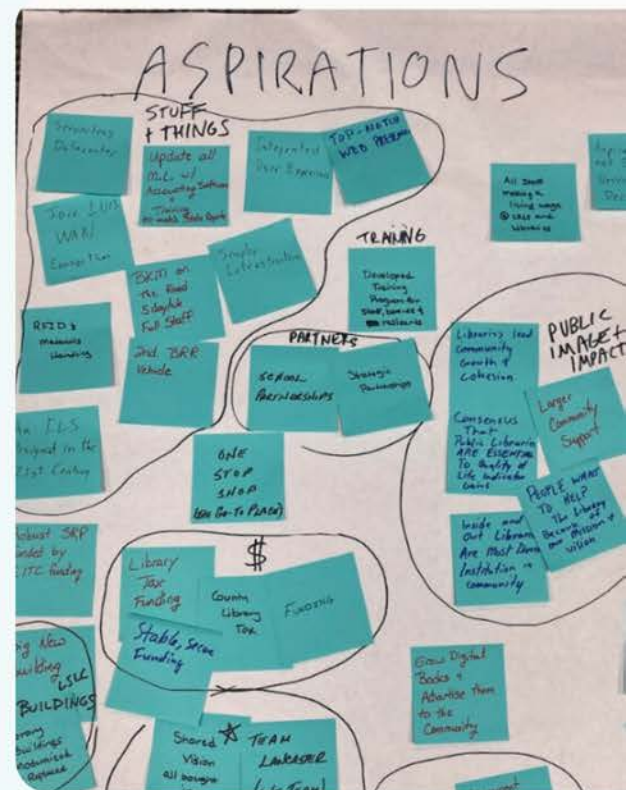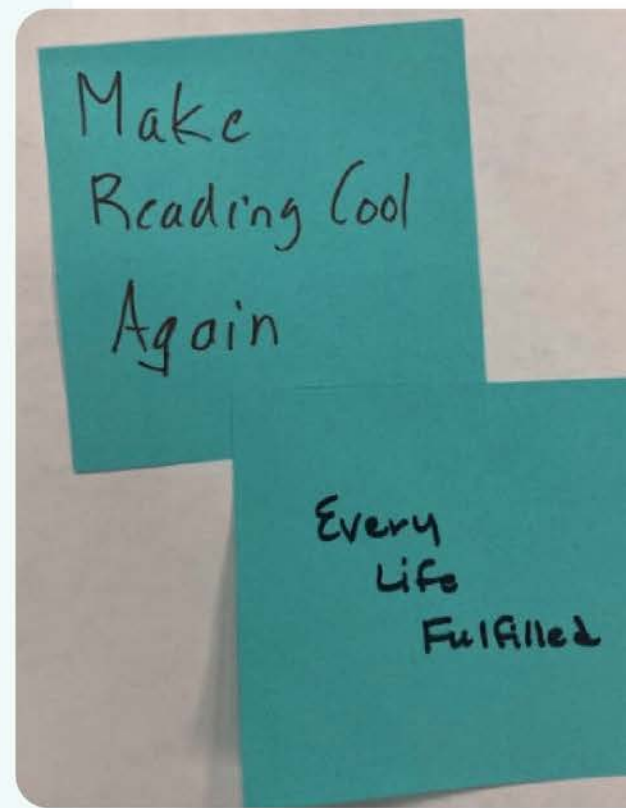
Snapshots from a LSLC staff SOAR exercise to capture Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Risks.

Strategic Priorities

● SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Manage internal resources with a long-term view so that LSLC provides a consistent, reliable foundation for its members.

● OPERATIONAL SUPPORT AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Strengthen member libraries' capabilities and capacity to maximize direct service to their communities.

● EQUITABLE ACCESS FOR RESIDENTS

Embrace the needs and nuances of delivering quality services and experiences for all.

● COLLECTIVE ACTION

Seed collaborative opportunities that activate a shared vision for the potential of libraries in Lancaster County.
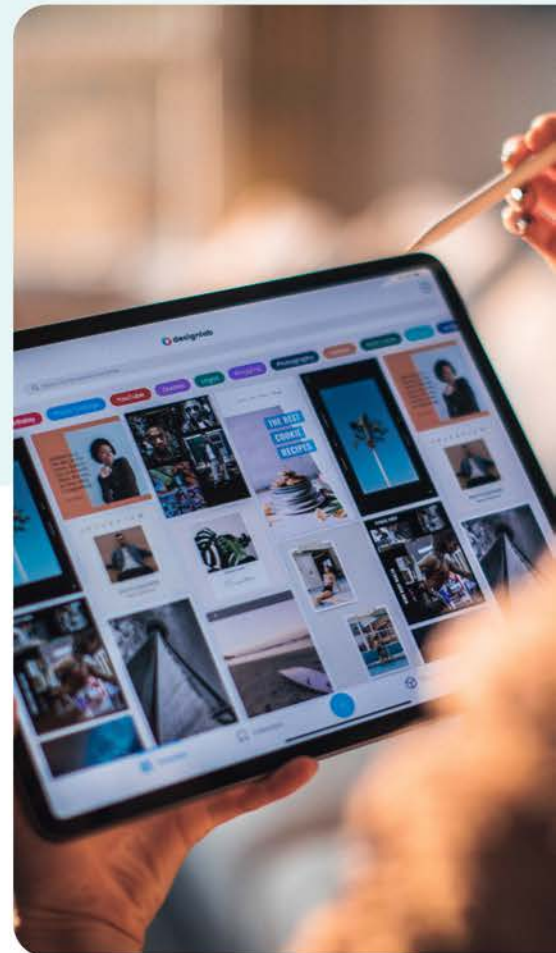
Sustainable Practices

Manage internal resources with a long–term view so that LSLC provides a consistent, reliable foundation for its members.

Objectives & Steps

Design models and package services to anticipate the reality of price fluctuations in the industry.
- Update member library agreements.
- Identify options to simplify contracts and negotiate as a group.

Invest in a healthy physical and digital infrastructure.
- Stand up a second IT backup node.
- Identify options for a new LSLC office.
- Invest in cybersecurity (ongoing).
- Assess which library catalog software offers the best return on investment going forward.

Build succession plans for key positions.
- Encourage mentoring and internships.
- Identify and cultivate relationships with future candidates.

Operational Support & Organizational Development

Strengthen member libraries' capabilities and capacity to maximize direct service to their communities.

Objectives & Steps

Provide on-the-ground support and consultation.
- Establish Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for Cataloging & Acquisitions and IT.
- Manage and steward the book delivery program.
- Promote advising opportunities including orientations and support for directors and boards.

Prioritize resources that save members time and money.
- Support annual reports, audits, and standardized accounting practices.
- Offer cooperative eBook selection and enhanced training and marketing.

Strengthen workforce skill sets and competencies through best practices and learning tools.
- Deliver targeted ongoing training for members (i.e. all abilities, board governance).
- Host unconferences and skill-sharing sessions.
- Facilitate cohorts for professional development.

Equitable Access for Residents

Embrace the needs and nuances of delivering quality services and experiences for all.

Objectives & Steps

Collect and analyze data to convey usage and needs across differing segments of the county.
- Develop outreach strategies with maps and geographic priorities.
- Help libraries tell their stories with data.
- Demonstrate the value and importance of a collaborative, countywide approach to service.

Source community knowledge and expertise to develop service strategies for underserved segments.
- Take the Bookmobile where it is needed most.
- Convene partners around common problem-solving goals.

Facilitate shared understanding and observance of guidelines, procedures, and standards.
- Maintain a central, easy to use online repository for knowledge management.
- Clarify and standardize inconsistent areas.

Collective Action

Seed collaborative opportunities that activate a shared vision for the potential of libraries in Lancaster County.

Objectives & Steps

Identify grants and in-kind resources to launch innovative programs.

- Continue to elevate Summer Reading.
- Generate an idea bank for private funding.
- Build awareness about the Lynx portal for online resources.

Cultivate a network of local advocates at the county and state level.

- Create press kits and talking points.
- Explore earned media opportunities.
- Cultivate key relationships.

Pursue sustainable funding to ensure long-term viability.

- Coordinate fundraising and related activities.
- Develop incentive programs for member libraries.
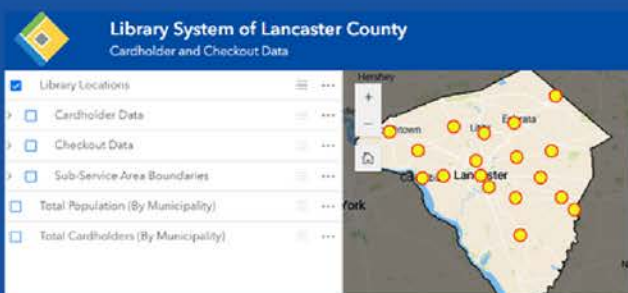- Partner with the public to support new revenue streams.

Operationalizing the Plan

Today, LSLC has envisioned and designed a Comprehensive Plan that grows with the county and builds upon progress year after year.

Consistent with our core values of **openness** and **adaptability**, we will revisit the Comprehensive Plan annually and iteratively throughout the year. We affirm our commitment to engage our members to incorporate their needs and aspirations into the decision-making process.

The strategic priorities and objectives are our framework. They give us a generous tent in which to work. The steps will grow and evolve as we accomplish specific actions and respond to changing conditions and new opportunities.

In late 2023, the Lancaster County Planning Department created an interactive GIS map with a point-in-time snapshot of data. Periodically, we may request point-in-time updates (for privacy purposes) to better understand and visualize customer usage patterns. We are mindful that current and future customers live, work, play, and travel across our county - plus have more remote options than ever before. Together, we will work to provide consistent experiences that respond to the different ways people interact with our libraries.

Library System of Lancaster County
Cardholder and Checkout Data

- Library Locations
- Cardholder Data
- Checkout Data
- Sub-Service Area Boundaries
- Total Population (By Municipality)
- Total Cardholders (By Municipality)

The Planning Process

Starting in May 2023, LSLC engaged in research, listening, sense–making, and design activities to chart its future course of action. Our consulting firm, Advancing with Purpose, guided us through the process. Key steps included:

An independent organizational assessment – Our consultants analyzed LSLC's current state through eight areas of inquiry. The resulting report established shared knowledge and understanding of the starting point for the strategic work ahead.

Service mapping validation – The consulting team conducted due diligence and a feasibility study of how the sub–service areas are allocated across the 14 member libraries, interviewing each director individually. The County Planning Department supplemented the study with GIS interactive data mapping that illustrates usage patterns by library.

Share out with Member Library Directors – The consultants held a special meeting in January 2024 that affirmed the current services areas, finding little return on investment to making minor tweaks. They identified that collaborative efforts to serve all county residents, regardless of subservice areas, were the best source of opportunity. The directors also engaged in a consensus–building exercise to rank requests and priorities for LSLC services.

Design workshops with LSLC Staff – Leaders at LSLC developed key inputs to the process, including a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Risks (SOAR) diagnostic, a draft new mission and values, and a set of problem–solving questions to help guide the strategy. The consulting team used their work to refine the draft strategic priorities, objectives, and steps.

Iterative Review – The LSLC Board stewarded the entirety of the process. Designated members provided guidance at weekly meetings. The full board reviewed the assessment report, solidified the final mission, and approved the plan.
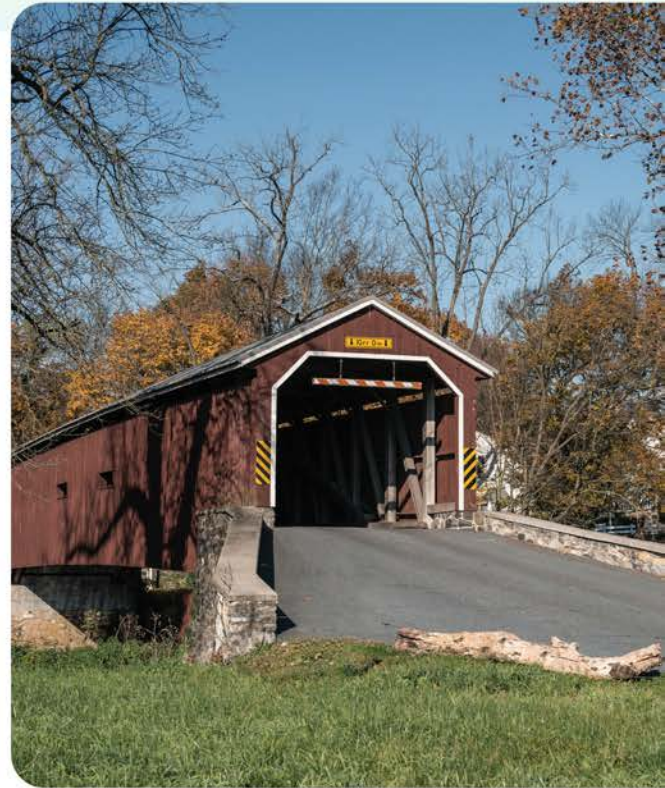
Developed by Advancing with Purpose, the Eight Areas of Inquiry help you pinpoint where your strategic planning effort fits into the efficacy of the organization as a whole.

Acknowledgements

Library System of Lancaster County is grateful to the Lancaster County Commissioners, Lancaster County Planning Department, Member Library Directors, and our LSLC leadership team for their dedication and investment in creating the 2024 - 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

Library System of Lancaster County Board Members

Dale Hamby, *President*
Matthew Eberts, *Vice President*
Alexandra Godfrey, *Secretary*
Rob Morgan, *Treasurer*
Cody Diehl
Marianne Clay Strittmatter

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Plans for Mission-Driven Organizations

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