

LINCOLN COUNTY LIBRARY

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2024-2029

MEET. EXPLORE. DISCOVER.



LINCOLN COUNTY
LIBRARY
EUREKA. LIBBY. TROY.

WHO WE ARE

VISION

A thriving Lincoln County through perseverance, innovation and opportunity.

MISSION

Connecting our communities to ideas, information and each other.

VALUES

RESPECT FOR PEOPLE

Honor diversity, individual perspective and the right to privacy and confidentiality.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ensure free and open access to ideas and information for all.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Foster dynamic collaborations to provide the highest quality of service within and beyond library walls.

ADOPT AND INNOVATE

Embrace change and encourage creative ideas and solutions to better serve the public.

INTEGRITY

Uphold the trust of the community in making efficient and effective use of all resources.

INTRODUCTION

MEET! EXPLORE! DISCOVER!

Lincoln County Library provides a physical and virtual hub for information, ideas, and knowledge. We strive to connect people with the resources they seek for education and enrichment by providing friendly and welcoming services.

Meet! Lincoln County Library provides countless opportunities for patrons and the public to meet. Whether it's 'Storytime' for preschoolers & parents; a safe space for teens to gather for a lively game of Dungeons & Dragons or Legos; adults meeting at the local coffee shop for a 'Book Club' discussion, or hosting an after-hours event for special occasions, the Library strives to connect with people.



Explore! Lincoln County Library can open the world for people through reading materials, movies, presentations, or the public computers offering free internet and popular software programs. If you can't find something on the shelf, the professional staff can search our vast borrowing network and order materials for you.



INTRODUCTION

Discover! Discover new knowledge at Lincoln County Library. Learn basic computer usage with a class for beginners; learn a new skill like sewing, woodworking, or baking; or discover the history of our community through archived photos and newspapers. Discover how to use a 3D printer or try out the virtual reality headset. Use our link to access virtual programs offered by the Montana Library Network. Lincoln County Library offers so much more than just books!



As we form our Strategic Direction for 2024-2029, libraries across the country are facing a myriad of challenges. Libraries are increasingly people-centric and strive to offer more services, programs, meeting spaces, and updated technology for their patrons. This equates to more staff, a larger budget, and more space to facilitate the changing needs of our communities.

As the current Strategic Direction comes to an end, Lincoln County:

- Is the 10th largest county in the state with a population of 19,600 residents
- Has more than 7,600 library cardholders
- Mailed almost 4,000 books to children in Lincoln County who participated in the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program
- Hosted 700+ programs for all ages with almost 17,000 people attending
- Circulated over 61,000 print materials and nearly 17,500 e-materials

The 2024-2029 Strategic Direction will be the guiding document for Lincoln County Library as we strive to solidify our position within the community by expanding services and outreach to meet the needs of the communities.

OVERVIEW

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Early in 2023, the Lincoln County Library began a process to create a new five-year plan for 2024-2029. Overseen by Library Director Alyssa Ramirez and the Library Board, the Library also engaged Stu Wilson, an experienced library planning consultant, to advise on and help facilitate a community process, culminating in the following plan.

The first phase of the project included creating a planning committee, and subsequent meetings with the library director and committee. This phase also involved gathering and reviewing community demographics, as well as data and trends from libraries' usage statistics. The second phase focused on gathering community and key stakeholder input, as well as site visits by the consultant to the three library buildings, collections, and other service offerings in Eureka, Libby and Troy.

The input processes included a community survey that was distributed widely both online and in hard copies in the libraries. Key stakeholder input included meetings with the staff of each library and phone interviews with each of the three County Commissioners. Three focus groups were also conducted, with approximately 16-18 attendees each, who represented diverse aspects of the three communities and County as a whole.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The community processes indicated strong support for the Library overall. Areas for improvement highlighted by the community include increased library services and programming for pre-K children, teens, and seniors; advancing tech and digital resources and assistance; workforce development; bringing together the community; and meeting and programming space for both library and community activities.

Through the planning process, the consultant looked at the strengths and weakness of the Library. The Library system is very well-run, efficient, welcoming, and pleasant compared to peer libraries. The staff are knowledgeable, innovative, and committed to serving the community. Library services, however, are lacking in a number of key areas for the service size of the County and the three major communities. These

OVERVIEW

deficiencies are not due to the staff perspectives or expertise, but are a result of a lack of funding and other critical resources.

First, the Library does not have adequate funding and has suffered reverses recently in its public funding. Again, based on the service population, it is estimated that the annual budget should be at least 25% higher than currently to provide adequate services and resources that meet the needs of residents. Reasonable, incremental increases in County funding, or moving to a Library District, could potentially solve this issue without overburdening taxpayers.

Related to funding, the staffing level of the Library is inadequate, and more support for current staff is also needed. Because of the lack of staff, some demographics in the County are seriously under-served, notably teens and seniors, and hours are not adequate to meet the needs of working families. Furthermore, because of its minimal staff resources, such services as teen and adult programming, computer assistance, and outreach to schools and the community are sub-par.

Final resource deficiencies are the three library facilities. The current buildings are not large enough to accommodate such activities as an enhanced children's areas, a separate teen space, quiet reading areas, and various sized meeting and programming spaces. Plans for a new Troy library would largely rectify this issue for that community, if constructed, but should also be paired with increased operating support for the larger space.

CONCLUSION

The plan below is designed to realistically advance the Lincoln County Library in its service to residents and the community. The Library has a strong foundation of staff, board, Friends groups and Foundation and in some areas, adequate services (notably, children's services). This foundation is an excellent base from which to build as resources allow. Because the Library's resource limitations prevent major advances in meaningful community service, this five-year plan focuses on three goals to increase support and resources (funding, facilities, and awareness), and a final goal that highlights modest, incremental service improvements that can be addressed within the current resource limitations.

Overview by Stu Wilson, Library Consultant, Columbia Falls, MT

GOAL & STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: INCREASE FUNDING AND SUPPORT TO INCREASE STAFFING, HOURS, RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES

STRATEGIES:

- Pursue creating a Library District
- Work with the Friends and Foundation to advocate for restoration of public funding, especially for increased staffing and added hours
- Advance the private fundraising capabilities of the Foundation

GOAL 2: IMPROVE FACILITIES TO ALLOW FOR EXPANDED SERVICES AND COMMUNITY USE

STRATEGIES:

- Build the proposed new Troy facility, with a combination of private and public funds, and with increased operating support
- Create plan for expanded or improved facilities in Libby and Eureka, highlighting the community needs for meeting and program spaces, quiet areas, improved children's and teen spaces, and expanded collections and technology offerings

GOAL 3: RAISE AWARENESS OF THE LIBRARY AND ITS SERVICES TO BROADEN SUPPORT AND USE OF THE LIBRARY

STRATEGIES:

- Create awareness campaigns to introduce the Library to non-Library users and identified communities that lack familiarity with the Library:
 - Advance and expand use of social media
 - Reach out directly to specific groups, such as homeschool communities, churches, schools, and other community groups
 - Increase the Library's presence at community events and in local papers
- Market the broad array of Library services

GOAL & STRATEGIES

GOAL 4: IMPROVE LIBRARY SERVICES TO BETTER MATCH COMMUNITY NEEDS

STRATEGIES:

- Continue to advance services to pre-K children and school readiness efforts
- Where space allows, enrich the current teen areas and activities
- Explore options for creating ongoing programs or events for adults, likely in partnership with another local organization, and possibly in an off-site community location
- Ensure that Library technology is up-to-date and meeting community needs
- Consider adding a service to provide limited computer/technology assistance, perhaps by appointment
- Review current Library hours, and explore a possible shift to more convenient hours and program offerings for working families
- Foster increased partnerships with schools and other community organizations to increase awareness and programming opportunities