



Farmville Public Library

Strategic Plan FY 2018 – 2022

YEAR 3 – FY 2020

Adopted by the Farmville Public Library Board of Trustees on January 9, 2017
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Executive Summary

Beginning in August 2016, a community-based planning committee met and helped develop a five-year strategic plan for the Farmville Public Library. Through a combination of library trends, input from library staff, and guidance from a community planning committee, the following strategic plan was created to guide the Farmville Public Library in providing exceptional library service to the citizens of Farmville and Pitt County through 2022 with an eye towards the future.

Statement on Challenges During FY 2020 (Year 3)

Farmville Public Library experienced two major challenges during FY 2020 (Year 3) of this strategic plan that significantly impacted library operations and available services. As such, many of the objectives in this strategic plan were not attainable due to extended facility closures, and the public's health and safety.

Construction of a new library facility began in October 2019 as expected, though this required a relocation to two smaller temporary facilities with less room for computers, collections and programs, as well as an unexpected delay in receiving a Certificate of Occupancy to open the temporary facility to the public.

The greatest challenge faced has been, and continues to be, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has and continues to affect not only the Farmville community, but the world and how humanity interacts. Following guidelines set by the Town of Farmville, State of North Carolina, and health experts, Farmville Public Library closed its facility to the public on March 17, 2020 to help mitigate the spread of the virus to citizens and staff. During its facility closure, the library established creative ways to offer some library services through the curbside service model while adhering to health and safety recommendations. The library facility re-opened to the public on June 8, 2020 with a plan to re-introduce the full extent of library services over a period of time. Health and safety precautions will continue to be at the forefront of the Library's plan for offering its services for the immediate and long-term future.

Looking ahead to Year 4 of this strategic plan and beyond, the Library will be looking forward to moving into its new, expanded facility in 2021. More importantly, the Library is optimistic about and is looking forward to resuming all of its services, programs and opportunities to the extent that is safe for the community.

Library Service Priorities and Goals

Connect to the Online World

Goal 1: People of all ages will have access to reliable technological and innovative tools, resources, and services to stay connected with others and obtain needed information.

Visit an Inviting Place

Goal 2: Users will have access to a safe, welcoming, and comfortable library facility at convenient hours.

Goal 3: The library facility will have adequate and comfortable meeting space for a large number of people that can be used outside of library hours.

Goal 4: Individuals of all ages will have access to a virtual space that promotes and encourages learning and recreation.

Establish Partnerships

Goal 5: Library users will benefit from the library establishing partnerships with a wide range of organizations in the community.

Goal 6: Individuals of all ages will have access to current information about resources and services offered by local organizations or collaboratively with the library.

Create Young Readers

Goal 7: Children from birth to age five will have programs and services designed to ensure that they will enter school ready to learn, read, write, and listen.

Goal 8: School-aged children will have access to resources, programs, and services that ensure success academically and individually.

Encourage Lifelong Learning and Reading

Goal 9: Adults will have access to materials for reading pleasure, as well as personal enrichment, and to educational and informational resources.

Goal 10: Adults will have opportunities to attend a wide variety of educational, cultural, and entertainment programs designed to inform, inspire, and enrich their lives.

Introduction

Motivation for Planning

In June 2016, the Farmville Public Library received a federally-funded LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) grant to develop a strategic plan for its library by implementing the planning process outlined in the Public Library Association’s publication, *Strategic Planning for Results*, and augmented by the Community Needs Assessment Process employed in a recent pilot project sponsored by the State Library of North Carolina.

The library was motivated by the fact that its “only strategic plan ... was created in 1992,” and with the roles of public libraries constantly evolving, its plan was “no longer relevant ... and is in need of direction to ensure they are serving the community to the best of their ability.”

The Planning Process

The Farmville Public Library chose to use the planning process outlined in the book, *Strategic Planning for Results*, and augmented by the Community Needs Assessment Process employed in a recent pilot project sponsored by the State Library of North Carolina.

This planning process was developed by the Public Library Association of the American Library Association to encourage public libraries to define their services in light of the needs of the individual communities being served. *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 outlined in *Strategic Planning for Results* 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 citizens served by the Farmville Public Library, to which a total of 172 individuals responded.

Participants

The key community stakeholders for the Farmville Public Library’s planning process formed the library’s community planning committee. This committee included:

Mary Morrison Dixon
Alana Fisher
Betsy Flanagan
Deb Higgins
Alma Hobbs

Charles Long
John Moore
Sara Singleton
Connie Widney

A staff planning committee, made up of members of the staff of the Farmville Public Library, was also involved in the planning process. The staff planning committee included:

David Miller, Library Director

Connie Widney, Children’s Librarian

Johnnie Zolman, Adult Services Library Assistant

Judy Andrews, Library Technician

The Farmville Public Library’s planning process was facilitated by Dr. Robert Burgin, a library consultant with over 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 the library’s service area; surveys of the area’s citizens and the library staff; library usage, funding, and technology data; and interviews with members of the local community.

The demographic data reflect the fact that both Farmville and Pitt County have lower median household incomes, lower median home values, and higher poverty rates than does North Carolina as a whole, that a higher percentage of the populations of both Farmville and Pitt County is African American, that Pitt County (but not Farmville) has a more highly educated population than the state as a whole, and that a much higher percentage of Farmville’s residents are 65 and over than is the case for Pitt County and the state of North Carolina. Demographic trends for the past ten years show that, compared with the rest of the state, Farmville and Pitt County have experienced mixed changes in economic well-being, slower growth in minority populations, mixed changes in levels of education, changes in age distributions, and slower population growth for Farmville.

A survey of Farmville citizens found that respondents most frequently used the library for adult books, books for children, and free Wi-Fi. A very high percentage of respondents rated the library as excellent in meeting their needs. When asked how the library’s services, resources, and facility could be improved, several respondents made recommendations related to the library facility, books, and hours. Respondents rated books for adults, books for children, and programs for children as the most important library resources and services. Fewer than one third of the respondents felt that some factor limited their use of the library, and the most frequently identified limit to library use was inconvenient library hours.

A survey of library staff found that a large number of staff regarded the library’s ability to meet the needs of its customers as very good. Staff identified the library’s strengths as the computers, the children’s programs, and the adult programs. Staff saw lack of space, lack of advertising for programs, and lack of staff as weaknesses. Staff listed the top priorities for the library in the future as space needs, computers, and marketing. Staff saw the most important library services as books for adults, free Wi-Fi, Internet access computers, outreach services to pre-school children, and videos and DVDs.

Data regarding library usage and funding show that the Farmville Public Library is providing a very high level of library service and is one of the best public libraries in the state, ranking among the top 25 percent

of the public libraries in the state in all but one of the measures examined. Over the past ten years, usage and funding for the Farmville Public Library have grown faster than they have for the average public library in the state in four of the twelve areas under study. A recent statewide assessment of the degree to which the library has been successful in providing public access to computer technology found that the Farmville Public Library exceeds the state average on two of the three major areas and on six of the eleven benchmarks that make up those three areas.

Interviews with members of the local community found strong support for and made recommendations related to adult programs, books and collections, children’s services, the facility, the hours, partnerships and outreach, the staff, and technology.

The library’s community steering committee used the community needs assessment to recommend five service priorities or areas of focus for the library’s strategic plan. The identified service priorities for the Farmville Public Library were:

1. Connect to the Online World
2. Visit an Inviting Place
3. Establish Partnerships
4. Create Young Readers
5. Encourage Lifelong Learning and Reading

The library staff planning team then drafted goals and objectives for each of the service priorities, and these were reviewed and approved by the community steering committee.

Service Priorities, Goals, Objectives, and Representative Activities

Connect to the Online World

Goal 1: People of all ages will have access to reliable technological and innovative tools, resources, and services to stay connected with others and obtain needed information.

- **Activity 1.1:** Provide responsive and reliable computing equipment and an Internet/Wi-Fi connection for educational, recreational, and professional endeavors.
 - **Activity 1.2:** Obtain and curate online resources that coincide with public demand.
 - **Activity 1.3:** Offer software programs and technologies that coincide with public demand.
 - **Activity 1.4:** Provide job seekers with information about available jobs and teach them the skills needed to apply for those jobs.
 - **Activity 1.5:** Offer a user-friendly Integrated Library System.
 - **Activity 1.6:** Offer computing and technology-related learning opportunities.
 - **Activity 1.7:** Provide comfortable and sufficient space for computing.
 - **Activity 1.8:** Monitor trends in computing and technology for consideration.
 - **Activity 1.9:** Provide assistance with personal electronic devices.
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- **Objective 1.1:** The number of uses of library computers and wireless network will increase by 2 percent each year.
 - **Objective 1.2:** A total of 200 individuals will attend computer-related learning opportunities each year of the plan.
 - **Objective 1.3:** On an annual survey, 90 percent of respondents will say that the Farmville Public Library's Internet and wireless connections, online services, resources, and staff support are excellent.

Status: 93.86% of respondents said that Internet and wireless connections, online services, resources, and staff support are excellent. *(Survey conducted March 17-30, 2019).*

Visit an Inviting Space

Goal 2: Users will have access to a safe, welcoming, and comfortable library facility at convenient hours.

- **Activity 2.1:** Ensure that staff have good sight-lines in order to provide better safety and responsive staff assistance.
- **Activity 2.2:** Determine whether there are opportunities to better utilize building space, including the addition of comfortable seating and other potential improvements to the physical surroundings that would make library use more enjoyable.
- **Activity 2.3:** Provide a comfortable and inviting environment to individuals that offers a choice of public and private spaces for reading, studying, working, and engaging with others.
- **Activity 2.4:** Provide Young Adults a supportive space and environment that provides enjoyable learning and social experiences.
- **Activity 2.5:** Adjust or increase hours of operation to coincide with public demand.
- **Objective 2.1:** The total number of individuals entering the library will increase by 3 percent by each year of the plan.
- **Objective 2.2:** The library will have a space needs plan completed by an architect to explore the space needed to provide adequate service to library users by FY2017.

Status: Completed February 2017. A new library facility was designed through library needs and community input, and unanimously approved by the Library Board and Town Commissioners. Construction of the new facility began in October 2019 with expected completion in 2021.

- **Objective 2.3:** On an annual survey, 90 percent of respondents will say they feel safe at the library and that the space they utilize is excellent.

Status: During the Library's space needs planning, the community identified safety concerns pertaining to the library facility, such as lack of sightlines and enclosed public rooms. The design of the forthcoming new library facility has considered these concerns with the goal of offering the public a safe and welcoming space. Construction of the new facility began in October 2019 with expected completion in 2021.

Visit an Inviting Space

Goal 3: The library facility will have adequate and comfortable meeting space for a large number of people that can be used outside of library hours.

- **Activity 3.1:** Offer a flexible space for learning and social opportunities for all ages that can accommodate a variety of events.
- **Activity 3.2:** Investigate ways for the meeting space to be used by the public outside of library hours.
- **Objective 3.1:** On an annual survey, 90 percent of respondents will say that the meeting space is excellent.

Status: During the Library's space needs planning, the community stated a need for additional meeting space for studying and programming. The design of the forthcoming new library facility has considered this need by providing meeting rooms, additional seating, and a dedicated programming space that can be used by the public after hours. Construction of the new facility began in October 2019 with expected completion in 2021.

Goal 4: Individuals of all ages will have access to a virtual space that promotes and encourages learning and recreation.

- **Activity 4.1:** Allow patrons to connect with the Library at any time to obtain information and materials that are in demand through up-to-date and user-friendly virtual services that are accessible via computers and mobile devices.
- **Objective 4.1:** The number of library's virtual visits will increase by 2 percent each year.

Establish Partnerships

Goal 5: Library users will benefit from the library establishing partnerships with a wide range of organizations in the community.

- **Activity 5.1:** Seek out and establish connections with local organizations for future collaborations and partnerships.
- **Objective 5.1:** The number of organizations that the library will partner with will increase by 2 percent each year of plan.

Goal 6: Individuals of all ages will have access to current information about resources and services offered by local organizations or collaboratively with the library.

- **Activity 6.1:** Seek out and establish connections with local organizations for the sharing of information.
- **Activity 6.2:** Offer space for library partners and organizations to promote their services within the library.
- **Objective 6.1:** The total number of questions received and answered in reference to local partners will increase by 2 percent each year of plan.

Status: Despite the difficulty in tracking this objective, the library continues to serve and partner with local organizations.

Create Young Readers

Goal 7: Children from birth to age five (0-5 years of age) will have programs and services designed to ensure that they will enter school ready to learn, read, write, and listen.

- **Activity 7.1:** Provide board books, concept books, non-fiction, and picture books that promote early literacy skills.
- **Activity 7.2:** Provide appropriate technologies and furniture so parents and children can use these resources together.
- **Activity 7.3:** Provide early literacy classes, such as Every Child Ready to Read, for parents and caregivers.
- **Activity 7.4:** Provide children with reading readiness, as well as helping them develop socialization skills, through age-specific programs at the library.

- **Objective 7.1:** The total number of birth to age five-specific resources being circulated and utilized will increase by 3 percent each year of the plan.
- **Objective 7.2:** The total number of program attendees will increase by 5 percent each year of the plan.
- **Objective 7.3:** Four early literacy programs will be offered each year of the plan.

Status: The library has offered the early literacy program, Every Child Ready to Read, four times per year. Moving forward, the Library will offer this program 12 times per year, or once per month.

- **Objective 7.4:** 90 percent of parents who respond to an annual survey will say that the space provided for children to learn alongside them is excellent.

Status: During the Library's space needs planning, the community identified the need for an updated learning space for children and their parents/caregivers. The design of the forthcoming new library facility has considered this need by incorporating a STEM lab/ maker space and additional space for learning and reading. Construction of the new facility began in October 2019 with expected completion in 2021.

Create Young Readers

Goal 8: School-aged children (6-17 years of age) will have access to resources, programs, and services that ensure success academically and individually.

- **Activity 8.1:** Provide resources to promote the success of children educated in the public, private, and home school environments.
- **Activity 8.2:** Provide appropriate computers and technologies that support school curricula and personal development.
- **Activity 8.3:** Offer children age-specific programs at the library that promote and foster academic success.

- **Objective 8.1:** The total number of school-aged resources being circulated and utilized will increase by 3 percent each year of the plan. *Please note certain types of in-house circulating and online-accessible materials cross over patron ages and types. Therefore, some of these resources may have been accessed by users other than school-aged children, and some materials accessed by school-aged children might not be accounted for.*

- **Objective 8.2:** The total attendance of school-aged programs being offered and attended will increase by 2 percent each year of the plan.

Encourage Lifelong Learning and Reading

Goal 9: Adults will have access to materials for reading pleasure, as well as personal enrichment, and to educational and informational resources.

- **Activity 9.1:** Provide collection development to ensure that adults have the materials they demand.
- **Activity 9.2:** Ensure that all staff are capable of providing readers' advisory (i.e., of making individualized book recommendations for library users).
- **Activity 9.3:** Create promotional material and displays to engage readers in the pursuit of new titles.

- **Objective 9.1:** The total number of adult materials being circulated and utilized will increase by 2 percent each year of the plan. *Please note certain types of in-house circulating and online-accessible materials cross over patron ages and types. Therefore, some resources may have been accessed by users other than adults, and some materials accessed by adults might not be accounted for.*
- **Objective 9.2:** Library staff will receive readers' advisory training annually.

Status: All library staff receives readers' advisory training annually.

- **Objective 9.3:** Library staff will create new promotional material for collections each month.

Status: Library staff creates promotional material for print and electronic materials monthly.

Goal 10: Adults will have opportunities to attend a wide variety of educational, cultural, and entertainment programs designed to inform, inspire, and enrich their lives.

- **Activity 10.1:** Provide programs for various adult populations that educate, engage, and satisfy curiosity on a variety of topics.
- **Objective 10.1:** The total attendance at adult programs being offered will increase by 3 percent each year of the plan.
- **Objective 10.2:** 90 percent of adults who respond to an annual survey will say that the programs they are offered are excellent.

Status: 90.29% of adult respondents said that the life-long learning programs they are offered are excellent. *(Survey conducted March 17-30, 2019).*