Strategic Plan for
Timberland Regional Library
2014-2018

Background documents:

Report on Data Gathering

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Report on Data Gathering
For the Timberland Regional Library Strategic Planning Effort

Introduction

Planning is a process of gathering and analyzing information, then using that information to make choices about goals and resource allocation. None of these steps is perfect or comprehensive. The amount of information exceeds the time to read it; new questions emerge to ask constituents. The imperfect nature of planning is also evident in choosing and prioritizing goals. An individual's personal preferences and point of view can lead a group to make choices based on those rather than those based on multiple viewpoints. Finally, the imperfection of planning is evident in the final plan, which soon becomes outdated as circumstances change.

What can mitigate planning's problems? We encourage organizations (and ourselves) to know when we collect enough information to make reasonable guesses about the future, the status of the organization, and about constituents needs. We also encourage participants in the planning process to acknowledge their own views and preferences and ensure that they are not only open to other views, but solicit those during the process. Finally, we urge that organizations look at the plan as one in the series of many such plans, which will lead their organization closer to its goals and to be flexible as new opportunities arise or new services are required, such as the demand for job information as a result of 2008's recession.

We have sifted through the information that we collected to identify themes supported by that data. You may be surprised that we propose that TRL adopt a limited amount of goals based on these themes. We believe that the TRL could adopt numerous legitimate goals and then identify multiple ways to reach those goals. However, in our assessment, the new Library Director should concentrate on strengthening the organization's structure and operation and the library should focus and strengthen some existing programs to meet a limited number of new goals. We are not suggesting that TRL adopt a status quo stance in the next three years. Instead we believe that by paying attention to organizational health and adopting new initiatives that support and expand existing services, TRL will make significant progress in the next three years. TRL is doing an excellent job at providing library services to its communities, a fact demonstrated by its high circulation and other indicators of use. We also recommend building in assessment as an integral part of the planning process, so that TRL can continuously improve its services.

Making these choices is hard; it is easier to keep all options on the table rather than selecting a few. However, selecting a few goals will enable TRL to provide adequate resources to fund activities needed to meet those goals; harness the efforts of all the branches in working toward common goals; and to pay attention to developing its organizational structure to support reaching those goals.

Identifying common goals for a large system with multiple service outlets can present a problem if local needs vary. However, we found many commonalities among the five counties. These common challenges and opportunities allow TRL to set goals that address cross county needs.

We hope that the data collection that we conducted provides the Planning Committee and the Board with enough evidence to make choices for the next three years. You may find other themes that we missed or wish to reframe the themes that we identified. You may adopt none, some, or all of our recommendations. We welcome changes and view this work as a guide to our discussions rather than must do's.

Methodology

We used four methodologies for gathering data to inform the planning process.

- Review TRL documents
- Review national library trends, planning documents from organizations in the five-county TRL area, and a comparison of TRL with similar Washington libraries
- A survey of the library staff members, friends and foundation, city and county officials
- Twelve focus groups: seven with the library employees and five with community stakeholders.

Themes and Possible Goals

As stated in the introduction, we decided to propose a limited number of goals based on the most relevant themes that emerged from our data collection.

- Strengthen local economies
- Strengthen families
- Enhance library's role as a community center
- Support community engagement through art, culture, and history
- Strengthen collections
- Enhance a supportive work environment

Under each theme you will see:

- A summary of the findings from the data gathered
- Possible goal language
- Possible strategic initiatives within that goal
- Examples of measureable targets for that initiative
- A general discussion of possible activities to implement the initiatives and the goal

Strengthen Local Economies

We found evidence throughout all data collection activities that residents in the TRL area believe that the poor state of the local economy is the most important challenge in their communities. Survey respondents and focus group participants identified lack of current jobs and the lack of well-paying jobs, slow or no economic growth, and high rates of unemployment and poverty as serious challenges. Statistics confirm these problems. Reports from Washington's Employment Security Department (ESD) show the unemployment rate for the five counties. We include the unemployment rates from January 2010 as the rates for all five counties peaked at its highest levels in that month.

Unemployment Rate	State	Grays Harbor	Lewis	Mason	Pacific	Thurston
January 2010	11.1%	15.7%	16.0%	13.2%	15.2%	9.3%
Aug 2013	7.0%	11.0%	10.5%	9.2%	9.6%	6.7%

Although unemployment rates have decreased from highs in January 2010, rates in all counties, except Thurston, continue to lag behind the state's average.

The latest County Profiles, (available at https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/regional-reports/county-profiles.) updated July 2012, again produced by ESD, predict that the economic recovery in Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, and Pacific counties will be a slow process of improvement. ESD's outlook is somewhat different for Thurston County, which ESD describes as, "a mixed bag with retail trade improving slightly and services gaining some ground over the year, but overall the recovery is going to be more of a slog back than a sprint."

To support these important community challenges, we recommend that TRL adopt a goal to support the growth of local economies and to work with other organizations to decrease unemployment through library services.

Possible goal: Individuals and business find resources and services from TRL to improve job skills and plan business growth.

Possible initiatives: Support library users seeking employment.

Possible measurable targets: Each year between 2014 and 2017:

- The use of TRL job resources increases by XX.
- The number of classes in job seeking skills increases by XX.
- The collection of job seeking resources and databases increases by XX.

Possible initiative: Support existing businesses and assist in the development of new businesses.

- TRL's cooperative agreements with community agencies targeting business development increases by XX.
- TRL assistance to entrepreneurs seeking information increases by XX.
- People starting businesses cites the library as contributing to the success of their initiative.

Discussion of activities to meet this goal and the targets:

TRL employees are members of the local and regional Economic Development Councils and these relationships should continue. We recommend that TRL identify other organizations most active in this area to ascertain ways that the library can help in their activities. Library staff can provide reference and research services for business proposals and showcase the library as part of business recruitment activities, ideas suggested by focus group participants that libraries can contribute to economic growth.

Washington State's Workforce offers a number of workshops for the job seekers in TRL communities. Library staff can offer to demonstrate library offerings during these workshops and highlight resources for writing resumes and cover letters. Focus group members suggested that TRL develop a presentation that employees can use throughout the counties. We received a suggestion in a focus group that Workforce could staff an office in the library.

The library currently offers assistance to individuals seeking jobs through a section on its website called Community Services. If the board adopts a goal based on improving economies, we recommend that the Employment section and resources receive a visible place on the website and that TRL work with users and reference staff members to design the navigation and description of its multiple resources. We also advise that all front-line staff receive training in how to best use these resources.

A discussion of the potential services libraries can offer alone and with partners would not be complete without a discussion of digital literacy skills. Operating a computer, understanding the Internet and the basics of commonly used software, have become a requirement for almost any type of job. Yet many adults do not have these abilities. Libraries, as well as other organizations, offer training in basic digital skills, either in a one-to-one situation or in a classroom setting. National library organizations attempt to identify the best resources for local libraries to use in their digital training endeavors and we encourage TRL to visit Digital Learn to find free teaching resources and advice on digital training.

To evaluate these efforts, we suggest collecting output data, such as program attendance, program assessments and number of programs, and asking each partner organization to assess the library's help. TRL can count usage made of its resources, including the Learning Express Library and the Job & Career Accelerator. We encourage TRL to review the resources through the University of Washington's Impact Survey that would allow library users to share how they use library technology and the results of such use.

Strengthen Families

Our next theme stems from our data collection as well as Cheryl Heywood's advice to consider a study, "Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)" (available at http://acestudy.org/) during this planning process. This study's findings suggest that certain experiences, such as abuse and neglect, are major risk factors for the leading causes of illness, death, and a poor quality of life. Researchers suggest that many of the nation's worst health and social problems arise because of adverse childhood experiences. These problems range from poor physical health to problems holding down and succeeding in a job.

The ACE Study uses an ACE Score, which is a count of the total number of ACE events that respondents report. The ACE Score indicates the total amount of stress during childhood and researchers have demonstrated that as the number of ACEs increase, the risk for health and social problems increases. The study concludes that the cumulative stress of ACEs is the most powerful determinate of the public's health and the strongest common driver of mental, physical, and behavioral health costs.

The Washington State Family Policy Council conducted a survey of the prevalence of ACE factors in Washington Counties and found that TRL's counties have populations with three or more ACE factors:

Percent with 3> ACE factors	Counties
31.75% to 35.06%	Lewis, Grey's Harbor, and Pacific
35.07% to 44.67%	Mason and Thurston

We are not suggesting that the library is responsible for mitigating ACE factors in their communities. The Washington State Family Policy Council stresses that organizations must work together, not in a "siloed" approach. Instead, we suggest strengthening a traditional and popular role of the library, that of introducing children to reading.

Possible goal: Preschool children enter school ready to read and parents have the tools to help their children develop literacy skills.

Possible strategic initiative: Support parents in preparing children to be ready for school

Possible measurable targets:

Each year between 2014 and 2017:

- XX parents who participate in the library's programs strongly agree that, "The program has helped them learn new things that I can do at home to help my child get ready to read."
- The number of programs to help children develop literacy skills increases by XX.
- The number of programs to help parents assist their children increase XX.
- XX of survey respondents know that TRL offers school readiness assistance.

Possible strategic initiative: Develop partnerships with community and government agencies to enhance early learning literacy skills

- TRL's cooperative agreements with community agencies early childhood literacy increases by XX.
- On a survey of community and government agencies, the library is recognized as contributing to their goals for preschoolers by XX of the survey agencies.

Discussion of activities to meet this goal and the targets:

Our first suggestion is for TRL to join with other organizations to participate in ACE reduction activities.

Our second suggestion is that TRL rethink its preschool programming to focus on two outcomes: that of improving children's school readiness and that of helping parents build skills needed to support their children's literacy. How would these activities help mitigate ACE factors? In the following chart, again from the Council, researchers present a set of the individual attributes needed to overcome ACE. Clearly, the library cannot help individuals develop some of these attributes, such as "friends or romantic partners," but the library can help provide children opportunities to develop their capabilities, provide positive relationships with an adult, and engage in pro-social activities.

Capability	Attachment and Belonging	Community, Culture, Spirituality
- **Intellectual & employable skills** - **Self-regulation – self-control, executive function, flexible thinking** - **Ability to direct & control attention, emotion, behavior** - **Positive self-view, efficacy**	- Bonds with parents and/or caregivers - **Positive relationships with competent and nurturing adults** - Friends or romantic partners who provide a sense of security & belonging, help with emotion coaching	- Faith, hope, sense of meaning - **Engagement with effective organizations and schools, work, pro-social groups** - Network of supports and services and the opportunity to help others - Cultures providing positive standards, expectations, rituals, relationships & supports

The library could change its traditional story time and services to preschoolers to potentially reduce ACE factors in their communities. We recommend that TRL adopt a program with substantial evidence of effectiveness for pre-school children to develop reading skills and to help parents gain skills for helping their children at home. The Washington State Board of Education indicates in their environmental scan that less than 50% of children enter kindergarten ready to learn. The library can be an important asset in improving reading readiness.

We do not believe that the library, as a single agency, has the scope to attend to some of the mitigation factors listed in this report. However, we do believe that by careful planning, using evidence-based curriculum for story times and paternal involvements strategies, the library can play an important role in helping children and their parents develop the qualities shown in bold above. We suggest adopting an "off-the shelf" curriculum as these are readily available, customized to fit a local need, and proven to work. We also suggest collaborating with organizations such as Head Start to offer these programs in their facilities, in addition to offering these programs in the library.

National trends support the view of the library being a leader in early childhood development. Furthermore, comments from focus group members supported this role for the library, with suggestions to offer such programs wherever children are and invite groups of children and their parents or caregivers, perhaps served by another agency, into the library during non-open hours to provide specialized programs. Library employees ranked children's program as one of the highest priorities.

The Library could focus on other groups, such as teens, to help mitigate ACE factors. We heard in focus groups that teens, especially in rural areas, had limited opportunities for after-school and weekend activities. It was suggested that the library could offer regular positive social activities for teens. However, as stated in our introduction, we believe that choosing one audience, implementing a uniform evidence-based program, and evaluating the results of this program each year, will help TRL develop the skills to implement other targeted programs. Practice in developing programs with goals to reduce ACE factors will give TRL confidence and experience to adopt other such programs. Furthermore, developing community partnerships with coordinating groups will open up new ways of meeting these challenges.

Enhance Library's Role as a Community Center

A major theme present in all the data collection results was the role of the library in the community and the concern that the library stays relevant to community needs. Most staff indicated a desire for the library to become a hub of the community, meeting community needs, offering desired hours and services, and responding quickly when new needs arise.   On the staff survey, 54.5 percent felt that the strength of the library currently was its emphasis on user needs. Many participants in the stakeholders' focus groups mentioned the idea of the library as a community hub. Most of these participants had engaged in some level of cooperative activity with the library.

However, the perception of the library as community hub is not reflected in the multiple agency and government strategic plans reviewed by the consultants. Many of these plans did not mention the library at all. In fact, one plan includes a long list of community agencies and another plan lists 32 community partners, but neither includes the library. Most plans indicate a desire to work with the community and presumably the library could be involved in these agencies' planning processes.

Statewide and national trends point towards developing the library as a community hub. This trend is reflected in the vision and values of the Washington State Library:

> Visions 2 and 4 of the Washington State Library: As a result of innovative partnerships and dynamic leadership, Washington libraries are recognized as stakeholders in their communities. Community members are actively engaged with libraries and view them as relevant and necessary.

> Value 5 of the Washington State Library: Library buildings and activities are community resources that pull people into the library.

A another major national trend is for library staff to become more involved in their communities, seeking collaboration with community and government agencies, and playing a major role in addressing community problems. Overall, library staff felt the library had to stay relevant and competitive by demonstrating the value of the library.

The goal of enhanced community involvement can be categorized into the following components:

- Addressing community issues and needs
- Outreach and partnerships with community and government agencies
- The library as place
- Consistent and persistent marketing the library to individuals and organizations

Addressing community issues and needs

Overall, staff believe that TRL addresses community needs. They were very pleased with current TRL services. We also found an appreciation that TRL and its branches are trying to meet expressed user needs, such as working with those that are looking for employment. They also offered suggestions for new services, such as parenting or financial literacy classes and more reaching out to the community. The need to assist residents with the ACA in particular is demonstrated by the percentages of uninsured people in the counties, with 25.1% of the population between 18-64 uninsured in Grays Harbor County; 23.0% in Lewis County; and 15.6% in Thurston County. No data was available for Mason and Pacific County.

Outreach and partnerships with community and government agencies

The American Library Association (ALA) defines outreach as: "services that are inclusive of traditionally underserved populations, including new and non-readers, people geographically isolated, people with

disabilities, rural and urban poor people, and people generally discriminated against based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, language and social class."

In the focus groups, one staff member expressed the opinion of many by saying, "We have to get out of the library and go where the people are physically."   Staff also said they appreciated and valued the existing cooperative partnerships and the library's ability to help people solve problems, such as hosting volunteers to help people with taxes and literacy programs and the library's assistance in helping people find jobs.   They also had suggestions for additional agencies with whom TRL, or at least their branches, might cooperate.

When asked how they cooperated with the library, many uses were cited by the stakeholder focus groups. A major use was of library facilities for meetings, programs, and training. Added to this was joint sponsorship of programs such as the library's Summer Reading Program. Some trust the library to have information the agency's users will need and they send people to the library for assistance. Five of the groups said a TRL staff member sits on the agency's board or a committee and indicated they appreciated the input brought by the library staff. Some use the library to distribute their own information because of the traffic through the library. Other cooperation mentioned was using the library as a neutral place for tutoring; planning special tours for clients; and working with the library to preserve an agency's historical records.

Several focus groups, both with staff and stakeholders, mentioned the plethora of agencies working on the same issues.   They said that an agency should serve as a hub to bring together groups working on the same issue.   They suggested the library could play this role, gathering information and providing a one-stop resource. We note that one such resource exists in Grays Harbor at http://www.co.grays-harbor.wa.us/info/pub_svcs/Housing/resourceLinks/resourceLinks.htm. In a related idea, two of the community strategic plans reviewed contained goals to develop an online information center about community resources, events, and services. These plans did not mention the library in assisting with such a role; however, the library could either support or be a major player in gathering this information. This activity would reinforce the library's role as a community center.

Another thread in this theme was the role the library can play in overall economic development. This activity is addressed in another area of this report. The relevance here is that TRL and its branches can work in cooperation with the local Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to help attract businesses to the area. Some national studies have shown that the existence of a quality library in a community can be a factor in attracting new businesses and investment.

Both involvement in cooperative arrangements and outreach to where the community is requires staff to be present in the community.

The library as place

A major thread in data collection was the concept of the library as place or a community center where people can congregate, learn, create, and have access to high-speed internet. The library is a place

where people without computers or with limited access to high-speed internet can access resources. Staff mentioned this library role often.

Almost all the branches have a meeting room although some are quite small. There was agreement from staff and stakeholders that the library has a reputation as a "neutral and safe place to meet. Use of the meeting room is free making it attractive to community and government agencies.   Stakeholders used words like "safe harbor," "common place," "non-school and non-government," "community center," "no hidden agenda," "a third place," and "no one comes into the library with their guard up." One said, "They will go to the library when they won't go anywhere else." One said, "The library is what the town square used to be.   The library fills the same function."   Some staff mentioned that the library's program for youth and teens provides, a "safe environment to have fun. It gives the kids another place to engage and an alternative to drugs."

Some focus group members did acknowledge that, despite this positive image of the library, some people still do not feel comfortable coming into the library. To mitigate this discomfort, stakeholders and staff suggested that the library be as inviting as the local coffee shop, with a physically pleasing place with comfortable lighting and chairs.

For some branches, the library is a major "hangout" for homeless people, particularly when the local shelter is closed and a haven for runaway teens.   The library also plays a role in referring people to needed services provided by other agencies and some branches are working with agencies to help solve these problems. One library staff member said that employees from one service agency serving homeless teens "sweep the library" to offer assistance.

Another aspect of the "library as place" is the hours that the library is open.   On the staff survey, 47.9 percent of staff indicated a major challenge to the library was the need for more or different open hours.   In the focus groups, some staff felt that the requirement that all TRL branches be open the same hours does not allow the library to respond to local needs. They suggested that the branch managers suggest hours that are most appropriate for their local community.   For example, in some smaller communities, residents go to a larger town on Saturday to shop, and the library could better serve that community's needs by having extended hours on a weeknight.   While different operating hours might be confusing to some users overall, branch staff felt that TRL was large enough geographically that users frequented only a limited number of branches in their area and could quickly recognize (and appreciate) hours established to meet their needs.

Consistent and persistent marketing of the library to individuals and organizations

Staff and stakeholders felt that the library is not marketed enough to the communities it serves and that marketing that was done was not always as effective as they wished.   One stakeholder said that "library services are SO SECRET."

On the one hand, there is a need for a consistent approach to marketing the regional library brand. One staff person said, "Lots of people don't know we are a system." On the other hand, while branch staff appreciated the need for consistent branding, some asked for more flexibility in timing and design

of publicity. The long lead-time required to have publicity materials designed and approved produced scheduling conflict with other community organizations that had shorter planning cycles. In addition, they felt there was a need for a local image of the branch library in the context of the entire TRL system. Some staff said that local communities identify more with their local branch than TRL overall.

Staff on the survey (38.8% percent) and in the focus groups staff felt that there is a perception that the library is obsolete and suggested that the library "advertise what people don't think of" as library services and a stakeholder suggested including more use of social media, particularly with teens. The stakeholder focus group members agreed. One stakeholder said, "There are a significant number of people who have not been in a library for decades" and others said, "Once kids are gone, they do not see the library as relevant" and "their lives are full and they don't see what the library can offer."

One suggestion, with which the consultants agree, is for TRL to organize focus groups with library users in each county, if not each Branch community. One stakeholder said that library staff should "get an hour at Harley's Sports Bar and ask what would get people into the library."   These groups could be informal discussions in locations where people congregate to ask them about their needs and suggest what the library might do to help.   Sometimes asking non-users what they need from the library is difficult as non-users frequently do not know what the library offers.   One stakeholder who was invited to a focus group because he was a community leader, came because he felt it was his job to attend, but literally had not used the library for years.   He was surprised, actually amazed, to discover that the library loaned e-books and DVDs and the type of services that could help him in his job.

Goal: People served by TRL view the library as a center of the community with comprehensive and useful collections and services and offering high value programs and events.

Strategic initiative: Libraries establish relationships with community and government agencies, particularly where there is close association with the library's goals.

Possible measureable targets:

- Service center and branch serve on XX of the community and government agency boards or committees that relate to the library's goals and strategic initiatives.
- Joint programming with organizations addressing the same goals as TRL will increase XX by XX.
- On a community survey, the local branch is recognized as contributing to the improvement of community life (or addressing at least one issue.)
- Libraries participate in the long range planning efforts of all community and government planning agencies that relate to the library's major goals.

Possible strategic initiative

The library is a physically inviting and convenient place for people to visit

Possible measureable targets

- By XX, a facility plan is established that addresses the physical situation of every library branch to best meet the needs of its users
- By XX, branch hours are designed to meet the usage needs of the local community

Strategic initiative

The library is recognized as a hub of the community.

Possible measureable targets

- In a survey, XX of the population can name at least one library service beyond checking out books.
- Attendance at library programs increases by XX.
- Circulation of library materials increases by XX.
- XX of new library cards are issued by XX.

Possible activities to be considered

There is a plethora of activities that could be planned to implement this goal and initiatives. Some of these ideas came from the staff and stakeholders focus groups. For example, under addressing community issues and needs, staff saw opportunities for the library to play a major role in the state and national government move towards e-government. More benefits must be applied for online and some of these are "life and death needs." Staff must be prepared to help people navigate these e-government resources. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) was one example.

Under outreach, staff suggested that the library participate in community fairs on health, education, celebrations, and other community events. One stakeholder said his community has a summer lunch program for disadvantaged youth. One staff member suggested that the library become involved, offering programs to attract youth to the library beyond the lunch experience.

Under the library as place, libraries could increase publicity about the library as a place to hold meetings, programs, have one-on-one tutoring and other use of library facilities.

Under marketing, a stakeholder said that most communities have social and business club such as Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions clubs. The stakeholder said that these clubs are always looking for programs where the library could be a speaker. Presumably these groups would be impressed that the library shares the same goals for community improvement. This speaker when on to say that "satisfied customers who share positive experiences; one are two voices in each demographic group can spread a message about the library" and that the library "needs to use different messages for different demographic groups."

Support Community Engagement through Art, Culture, and History

TRL offers a wide range of programs for the community: Connect Children and Connect Seniors, Affordable Care Act assistance, Money Smart Week, and the Veterans Service oral history project. On the staff survey, 70.7% of staff felt that programs and events was a current strength of TRL. However, data identified in part of the environmental scan and in the focus groups suggests that TRL could expand art, cultural, and history programming.

The review of the strategic plans of community and government agencies showed that nine agencies placed a high priority on goals to raise awareness of art, celebrate culture, preserve and educate the history of the community, and cooperate to provide quality recreation activities for people of all ages.

The Centralia Plan summed up the approach of several of the plans:

> *An important function of a successful historic preservation program is education. Historic buildings and sites offer a valuable supplement to the written record and provide a unique three-dimensional learning experience. The preservation and interpretation of Centralia's historic resources will unquestionably contribute to the overall education and cultural development of our fellow citizens. As such, the City supports community education programs, which focus on historical events and structures.*

The plan continues to specifically suggest the cultivation of partnerships between "museums, historical organizations, tribes, and/or libraries."

The underlying reasons for celebrating art, culture, and history community together promote interaction among community members and develop understanding of these important cultural values. For example, the Olympia Comprehensive Plan articulates the purpose of cultural events saying that "public art, events, and recreational programming to encourage social interaction, foster community building, and enhance the visual character and livability of Olympia." Public buildings, but not libraries specifically, are mentioned as location for temporary art exhibits.

The celebration of art and artists can also be a way to make the library a community hub. Those libraries with sufficient space can sponsor art exhibits and artists working with library users to create their own art.

In the focus groups, staff felt that art and culture was one of the strengths of the TRL region, even in smaller towns. The stakeholder groups were more vocal about the role of the library in this area. One group (Lewis) said, "The library holds historical information…and research to find out who we are." They also suggested building a collection on Native American culture. Another group (Thurston) said that arts and such events "are a great way to get to people. [Programs] are always filled and it's a great way to connect to people." This group also added that the library "can be the public face of culture and literature."

Another group (Grays Harbor) said the library organizes and catalogs their documents as a record of their activities and makes them available to the public. Another group (Mason) praised the library for its work on the history of a major business in the area. The library also found letters to and from people in the community sent during wars. They felt it was the library's responsibility to collect such material and make it available. One participant added that there is a strong sense of heritage in the community, calling it a "historical fabric." They asked that the library continue and do more of collecting stories from veterans and also more stories of the history of local businesses and organizations. They felt the library could "encourage people to come in and talk, communicate, network, instead of isolating activities such as smart phones." In the area of culture they suggested that the library partner with local cinema to show movies that opened a "window to the world."

Another group (Pacific) suggested the library have traveling displays on the history of the area "to keep history alive" and "create a sense of belonging…deepens feelings of connections with the community." This group also suggested the library do cooperative programs with local theater and host traveling theater performances.

Possible goal: People served by TRL will be able to enjoy local art, understand the history of the area in which they live, and participate in cultural activities through the library.

Possible initiative: TRL supports community culture and interaction through programs and exhibits.

Possible measurable targets:

Targets set each year of the plan:

- Increase the number of programs offered by XX.
- Increase the attendance at library programs by XX.
- Increase attendance at library programs by specific groups (for example, age) by XX.
- Sponsor at least XX art exhibits every year.
- By XX, people responding to a survey name the library as a primary source of historical and cultural information.

Possible initiative: The library is recognized by local communities for its contributions to preservation of and education about local history and cultural.

Possible measurable targets:

- By XX, the library has increased and expanded its collection by adding oral histories of XX businesses.
- By XX, the library's collection of resources on Native American culture has increased by XX.
- By XX, the library's collection of resources on Hispanic culture has increased by XX.
- By XX, the library has digitized XX resources relating to the history of the community and its government and industry.

Discussion of activities to meet this goal and the targets:

Many activities were suggested in the stakeholder focus groups. TRL already offers one project, the Veterans History Project, in cooperation with the Library of Congress, TRL could expand to obtain oral histories of community businesses and industry.   These oral histories can be the basis of programs to support the history of the area and attract residents and tourists to learn more.   One possibility is the creation of a community "wiki" that allows residents to submit photos, artifacts, ad personal memories to a collective community history in cooperation with local museums and historical societies.

Creative programming for all ages can promote community spirit and cultural heritage, particularly in support of cultural minorities. Population data shows that the five counties are overwhelmingly Caucasian; over 80% of the population in all five counties.   The next largest population group is Hispanic with 7-8% in all five counties.   The next largest population is Native Americans at 4.5% in Grays Harbor County.

One library in Texas sponsored programs on the history of major ethnic cultural groups in the community. They reported that it drew in many members of these groups that had never used the library before.

Another possible action comes from the data gathered that compared TRL to other regional libraries in the area.   All of the libraries had substantially higher program attendance per capita than TRL, particularly Sno-Isle that has six fewer branches and over 2.5 times the program attendance per capita. An investigation into the high performance of Sno-Isle might be warranted to find why. Questions to ask include: What type of programs do they offer that draws in so many people? How do they cooperate with community organizations?   How many programs do they offer weekly?   How are their programs planned and publicized?

Strengthen Collections

Libraries are traditionally identified by a collection of resources, traditionally printed materials, and now digital resources. While this reports suggests that TRL develop partnerships with other organizations to help meet community challenges, TRL also needs to grow its collections. The suggestions from the focus groups pertained to three aspects of TRL collections:

- Keeping collections current and expanding them as new needs and opportunities arise
- Updating technology
- Expanding into new and innovative approaches to collections and their delivery

Keeping collections current

Staff appreciated the current quality of the collection throughout the system and that even the smallest library has a "great collection." They felt the collection was balanced with something for everyone.   On

the staff survey, 55.5 percent of staff said a major strength of TRL was its quality collections in all libraries.   They also felt that a high priority for TRL was print collections (4.37 rating out of 5) and increase e-book collection (3.89 rating.) Community stakeholder groups did not mention the library collection.

TRL should ensure that the collection stays current and available to all branches. The major suggestion for collection improvement was in relation to building a collection about Native American and Hispanic cultures. The collection should also be developed to support the goals adopted by the Board.

Technology

As more and more information and resources are only available online, libraries play a critical role for people who do not have computers at home, whose computers are too limited to access digital resources, or whose internet connection is not fast enough to download needed information. As all library staff know, people are flocking to libraries to use and learn how to use computers and resources they need.

A library must keep its technology capacity not just current but ahead of the demand because in an emergency (such as a disaster or recession), demand can increase quickly. A library needs to ensure that its broadband connectivity is strong enough to support all access needs, supply technology for use by those who need it, and continuing to make available and expand electronic resources.

On the staff survey, 43.7% of staff feel that "high quality technology" is already a strength of TRL and almost 30% feel more technology is needed.

In the staff focus groups, staff said they appreciated that the IT system was stable and reliable with little downtime; and that there was a high quality, strong infrastructure with good planning behind it. Participants in staff and stakeholder groups said the library has a major role in helping people use technology, particular mobile devices, online services, and downloadable books. Staff suggested that they would like to have new technology available for staff to practice on, particularly those most popular with users such as cell-phones and tablets, so that staff know how to use them when asked by library users. Stakeholders added that the library could "manage the transition between digital and print."

When asked for their vision for TRL five years into the future, many comments included new technology. Commenters suggested an increase in digital material, up to date friendly, innovative technology, a "red box kiosk" to dispense library resources and easy-to-use, dynamic interactive technology. There was also the suggestion of digitizing the music of local musicians and making that available to users.

New and innovative approaches

Staff recommended one new approach that has been implemented in many libraries: the creation of maker-spaces in libraries. This is a national trend in which libraries establish space within the library that allows users, from children through adult, to create physical and electronic products of interest and use. Maker-space is defined as: 1) physical and human resources dedicated to patron creation and 2) library supplied resources for the purpose of creation such as computers, cameras, tools, etc. Libraries

have installed media labs (editing equipment, green screens) and other technologies (3-d printers, sewing machines, and computer software). All ages can use these resources and teenage boys are a prime audience, a usually difficult audience to attract to the library. More recently, maker-spaces are attracting adults. In an email from a staff member at Colorado's Johnson County Public Library, Meredith Nelson wrote, "I've helped patrons set up blogs for deaf job seekers, film commercials, upload videos to their business website, and take/edit staff photos for their company website. Freelancers use the software, adults practice music before paying high end recording studios, and small businesses making everything from business cards to changing the size of their logo for letterheads. We also have a 3d printer where adults have made prototypes, and even a biology grad student who printed out some disease molecule models. It's gotten incredible response from very diverse groups."

Stakeholder groups echoed the staff's suggestions adding that the library be a "showcase for new technology" and calling for a 3-D printer (that people would want to "watch it print"), and that businesses might be willing to support the library in purchasing this new technology. Focus group members also mentioned expanding into non-traditional collections beyond print and technology, such as collections of seeds, tools, or fishing equipment (all being circulated by another library in the US.)

A final suggestion for an innovative new approach was a "tech-mobile" modeled after the traditional book-mobile. The "tech-mobile" would be outfitted with computers, Wi-Fi, perhaps maker-space technology, and would travel to locations providing access and training.

All of these innovative approaches would require extensive planning and budget allocation that should not be undertaken without careful consideration of all the budget, space, and staff implications.

Possible goal: People served by TRL have access to the most up-to-date resources and technology for their education, enrichment, and enjoyment.

Possible strategic initiative: TRL maintains a robust print and electronic collection resulting in a quality collection.

Possible measurable target:

- The digital collection will increase by XX by 20XX.
- Selected resource collections (named) that support the TRL goals will be increase by XX by 20XX.
- The e-book collection will be increase by XX; samples of all devices are available for examination and use.

Possible strategic Initiative: TRL commits to cutting edge technology in all branches to meet demand and specific needs of users.

Potential measureable targets

- All public service staff are trained to assist users in using e-book download devices.
- Computers are available to meet the demand in every branch.

- Broadband speed is adequate to meet the demand every hour the library is open.
- By XX, on a survey, XX % of library users credit the library as helping them achieve a personal goal.

Possible strategic initiative

TRL plans for the implementation of innovative collections.

Potential measureable targets

- By XX, TRL will investigate the budget, staff, and space implications of creating maker-spaces at selected TRL libraries and, if viable, implement by XX.
- Use of the maker-space will be at a level of XX by 20XX.
- Business users of maker-spaces will report that the library contributed to their business success.
- TRL will launch a "tech-mobile" by XX.
- XX users will use the "tech-mobile" by 20XX.

Discussion of activities to meet this goal and targets:

TRL could evaluate the various uses of different aspects of the collection and use this to determine future purchases.   Whatever goals and initiatives TRL chooses, the collection, both print, technology, and media should be enhanced to support these initiatives.

For example, if Strengthen Families becomes a goal, the library should enhance the collection of books for early and new readers, on parenting; and on the ACE factors that impact children.

If the library chooses the Strengthen Local Economies goal, the library should enhance its collection on both supporting job seekers and supporting businesses that want to improve or that are new.

Probably the most intensive collection development would come if the TRL chooses to enter the area of maker-space.   This typically requires space for the activity to happen as well as investment in equipment and technology, some of which can be very expensive. However, other libraries around the country can be models of what the establishment of such a center would cost and what should be included. The Chicago Public Library recently received a grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services to create a model maker-space and to create a workbook to advise libraries that wish to replicate this service.

Create a Supportive Work Environment

No library can succeed without trained and dedicated employees who give the highest priority to customer service to meet the needs of their users.   An important factor in creating dedicated and committed staff is to provide a supportive work environment.

During our data collection phase, we found these issues related TRL's work environment.

- Customer service
- Staff training
- Communication and decision-making

Customer Service

All focus groups, staff and stakeholder, identified that TRL's high quality of customer services was a major strength. On the staff survey, 94.7% felt that friendly and helpful staff were a strength of TRL. Stakeholders particularly appreciated the involvement of library staff on community committees and boards and the willingness of staff to participate in cooperative projects. Staff are proud of their quality customer service, that they are respectful of all individuals, and that they provide an engaging environment.

Staff identified several issues related to providing quality customer service. One issue had to do with staffing levels in the branches, particularly related to the availability of substitutes and the lengthy time on the desk without a break which doesn't allow time for work that must be done off-desk. Another was the issue of hours described before in this report. A third issue, mentioned particularly on the staff survey by 48.3% of staff, was users with challenging behaviors. This would imply that training in this area would be appropriate.

Staff training in new roles

New services require that staff develop new job skills. Helping people access e-government and complete benefit forms requires staff to know about local, regional, and state benefit programs. Early literacy programs require a higher level of understanding early childhood development. To serve business adequately, some staff may need advance business research and business planning skills. Becoming a community hub may benefit from staff with facilitation skills. Helping those inept with technology and new devices ("My daughter got me this e-reader for Christmas, how do I use it?") requires staff to be technology competent. When before, technology could be the responsibility of the IT staff, now all public service staff must have knowledge of different devices and teaching skills.

During some of the staff focus groups, some staff said that not all staff were willing to learn new skills and that users were disappointed when an employee with technology skills was not available. This problem suggests a need for a different kind and more extensive training as well as consideration of skill levels when new employees are hired. Job descriptions may need to be tailored to match the strategic goals established by the Board.

If TRL sets goals and adopts strategic initiatives in some areas recommended in this report, staff must receive training in these areas and all staff must feel some responsibility for the success of new initiatives. It is difficult for new initiatives to succeed if staff perceive these as another's responsibilities and not their own. Staff must understand the need for new directions and support them with their colleagues and the public.

Communication

A thread through all of the staff focus groups was communication between the Service Center staff and Branch staff. Some indicated they do not always understand the rationale behind Service Center decisions or how Service Center staff will use information that they request. They believe this is particularly true when the policies affect customer service, such as the requirement that all libraries are open similar hours or the long lead-time required for publicity for branch programs. Along these lines, Branch staff asked for more input into decisions before they are made, with the opportunity to comment on possible implications on how proposed changes will affect public services.

As with the tension between central TRL image branding and Branch identity, the balance between centralized and quick decision-making is difficult to obtain. TRL is a large system, both geographically and operationally. Staff want decisions made quickly, yet desire input into the process. Staff want decisions to address their specific needs, yet TRL needs to look at the needs of Branches and users system wide. However, people support what they help create. Organizations in general work best when staff have input into decisions (understanding they are not the final decision maker); when staff can communicate their concerns about decisions; and when rationale behind information requests and decisions are made clear. One staff group suggested that TRL needed to be "nimble and not afraid to make mistakes." This might lead to "pilot" projects to verify draft policies and procedures before they are implemented system-wide.

When asked to identify a vision for the future, staff felt that TRL should be known for:

- Staff that went the extra mile for users
- Outstanding, enthusiastic and well-trained staff
- Staff that are crossed trained, knowledgeable, and adaptable
- TRL uses collaborative and integrative decision-making.

One staff member summed her vision up as follows: "TRL bridges the gap between administration and branch priorities to provide continual innovation, efficiency, quality resources, and outstanding service to all people in our diverse communities."

Goal: People served by TRL libraries receive quality service from staff who work in a supportive working environment.

Possible strategic initiative: TRL provides outstanding public service

Possible measurable targets

- In surveys conducted with library users, xx recognize TRL for its customer service.
- In any survey conducted by communities about government service, TRL is ranked # 1 or #2 in serving the public.

Possible strategic initiative: Staff receive significant training in the areas of TRL's priority goals.

Possible measurable targets

- XX of staff can explain the purpose of new library services and can provide basic service that supports it.
- On a user survey, XX report that they could get help from library staff on all library services.

Possible strategic initiative:

TRL gathers input from staff on policy and procedures and provides, as possible, branch flexibility within system policies.

Possible measureable targets

- On the staff survey, XX of staff indicate they were able to provide input on decisions.

Discussion of activities to meet this goal and the targets:

Because of the large number of staff who felt problem patrons were an issue, specific training should be offered on this topic.   When TRL's future goals are selected, training in each of the new initiatives should be provided in an entertaining and engaging way.   Partner agencies that can bring focus to an issue (such as economic development or ACE) should be invited to present the issue in a way that invokes the impact of dealing with the issue.

Staff raised several issues of real concern to them that involve the development and implementation of policies and procedures.   TRL should give serious consideration to exploring flexibility in hours based on community needs and a flexible approach to publicity about branch programs.

The annual staff survey might be expanded to ask two questions about staff opinion of the library: What is the biggest problem TRL faces; and what is the one thing that TRL can do to improve library services? Some of the issues identified in the focus groups did not appear in the annual staff survey because there were no questions that caused them to come to light.