RANSOM DISTRICT LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A strategic planning process is an important commitment for a library. The successful process involves gathering information from and about the community, examining comparable libraries and best practices, and involving the community, the staff, and the library board. This multiple month project results in a blueprint for both immediate and long-term improvement in library services. Through the strategic planning process, the library identifies:

- service needs and community expectations;
- location, facilities, and space allocation;
- governance and organizational structure; and
- fiscal requirements for capital expenditures and operating costs.

Strategic Planning is the process by which the guiding members of an organization envision its future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future. Why do organizations undertake strategic planning? Because strategic planning:
- Allows concentration of resources on key areas
- Gives management the ability to deal with and manage change
- Improves decision-making and management effectiveness.

The library can benefit in a number of ways by undertaking a comprehensive organizational review and planning process. The benefits include a renewed sense of purpose, enhanced communication and leadership, and an up-to-date perception of the library's value that will help it be recognized as a partner in community development. A strategic plan provides a "road map" for the library board and library staff.

Based on the comparative statistical information, the focus group discussions, and comments throughout the planning process, it is clear to the consultants that the Ransom District Library is an important community presence. The staff is clearly a strength of the Library and is recognized as such by the community. The building itself and its location in the community are also valued. However, in both the focus group sessions and in discussions with strategic planning committee members it was evident that many of the Library's shortcomings are directly related to the Library's lack of space.

In the consultants' view, addressing the space issue is the most pressing priority identified in the strategic planning process. All other issues are in some way inter-connected and dependent upon a determination by the Library's Board of Trustees on expansion, renovation, or relocation of the Library facility. Moving forward with a

facility assessment was identified as the most important initiative by members of the strategic planning committee.

Many of the areas of weakness or desired changes are relatively minor and several of them could be a "quick fix" (i.e., advertise availability of new titles). Other areas commonly mentioned are a desire to change the public perception of the Library, and to have the Library be more visible in the community through marketing and public relations efforts.

The value of Library programming was recognized as an important benefit to the community and a valuable outreach effort on the part of the Library. Programming, of course, depends on other key resources of staff, space, and funds and the Library administration and staff will need carefully to evaluate the impact of programming to assure maximum return on the investment of resources. The Library can also benefit by seeking additional partnership opportunities that allow other organizations to share the responsibilities (i.e., an author night in conjunction with the Otsego and/or Allegan libraries).

There is clearly work to be done to move the relationship with the Friends of the Library organization forward. The strategic planning process identified a number of initiatives the Friends group could undertake, but the first step is to establish consistent communication between the Library administration and staff and the leadership of the Friends. It would be helpful for the Library administration and Board President to meet with the leadership of the Friends to determine mutual goals and determine a set of operating principles that assures all involved understand the rules of the relationship. It is clear to the consultants that all the parties want the Library to be a key community asset. The consultants believe a positive working partnership is not only achievable and it will have tremendous benefits for the Library.

Financial concerns influence the ability of the Library to meet patron needs as much as space constraints. The challenge of decreasing funding in a time of increasing demand will place serious strain on the Library's ability to provide the desired "more of everything" identified by participants in the planning process. Alternative funding sources including grants, corporate underwriting, and fundraising will play a larger role in balancing many libraries' budgets than ever before.

The consultants hope this planning process and the resulting plan document will assist the Library administration and Library Board in determining priorities the community will support and understand.

RANSOM DISTRICT LIBRARY
PLAINWELL, MICHIGAN

STRATEGIC PLAN
NOVEMBER, 2010

VISION

Connecting our community, enriching lives

MISSION

To serve with integrity all residents of the district by providing opportunities to enhance lifelong personal growth and the cultural life of the community

GOAL: BUILDING / FACILITY – SEEK AND EVALUATE OPTIONS TO EXPAND, IMPROVE SPACE, OR RELOCATE

OBJECTIVES:
- Conduct a usage analysis
    - ✓ Who will take the lead?
    - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
    - ✓ When will this be done?
    - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Establish a process by April 2011 to investigate facility needs for expansion or relocation
    - ✓ Who will take the lead?
    - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
    - ✓ When will this be done?
    - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Once process to investigate facility needs is identified, develop a mechanism to ensure community involvement
    - ✓ Who will take the lead?
    - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
    - ✓ When will this be done?
    - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Evaluate alternatives using a cost benefits analysis to address space needs
    - ✓ Who will take the lead?
    - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
    - ✓ When will this be done?
    - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Identify funding options
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

GOAL: COLLECTIONS – ENSURE COLLECTIONS ARE ALIGNED WITH PATRON INTERESTS

OBJECTIVES:
- Advertise the availability of new titles
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Identify and track current usage and trends to measure patron interest
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Prioritize and update collections based on identified needs or usage
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Promote interlibrary loan program, new acquisitions, and options to expand collections at minimal cost
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

GOAL: FRIENDS – EXPAND MEMBERSHIP AND VISIBILITY OF FRIENDS

OBJECTIVES:
- Develop a mechanism to assure official Library representation and communication at monthly Friends' meetings
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Place pictures or biographical information on Friends' members in the newsletter
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Develop means to more closely associate the Friends group with the programs and goals of the library and communicate this information to the community
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Create a campaign to increase the membership of the Friends group, including students and younger volunteers
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Expand publicity for events and volunteer opportunities
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Develop grandparent/kid mentoring program
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

GOAL: FUNDING – MAXIMIZE SERVICES WITHIN FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS, SEEKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS

OBJECTIVES:
- Evaluate existing needs and plan and prioritize alternative funding activities on a cost/benefit basis
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Maintain building restoration fund
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Explore endowment fund usage
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Seek opportunities for additional funds including grants, wishing wall, donations, bonds, beneficiaries, endowments
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Establish a grant writing committee with district-wide representation
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Create a campaign for awareness of/request for specific donations
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

GOAL: PROGRAMS – MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP PROGRAMS THAT ARE RESPONSIVE TO THE COMMUNITY

OBJECTIVES:
- Improve the promotion of programs and seek feedback through surveys and evaluations on existing programs
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Survey patrons for possible new programs
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Assure a mix of programs in the areas of the arts, culture, and practical skills
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Collaborate on space and costs with other programs and events
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

GOAL: TECHNOLOGY – MAINTAIN AND EXPAND RESOURCES CONSIDERING TRENDS

OBJECTIVES:
- Identify current usage and trends
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Evaluate infrastructure needs
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Increase access to computers/technology including more stations, creation of an express lane, with the goal of reduced waiting time
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Seek to collaborate with area groups (community ed, educational programs, coops) in sharing resources (space, people, hardware/software)
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?

- Develop a technology plan after completing a community survey and assessing current capabilities
  - ✓ Who will take the lead?
  - ✓ Who else will need to be involved?
  - ✓ When will this be done?
  - ✓ What resources will be needed?