



AACPL Strategic Plan · July 2014 – June 2017

Title

Life Expanded: Renewing our Public Libraries

Brand Promise

Life Expanded – Anne Arundel County Public Library expands life's possibilities by sharing resources for knowledge, entertainment, and community engagement. We provide discovery tools and innovative spaces to expand minds and create learning opportunities from early childhood through adulthood.

Introduction

Building on the Past and Present

In early 2013, Anne Arundel County Public Library (AACPL) embarked on a journey to create a robust strategic plan that would guide our library system through the next few years. As the planning process progressed, it became apparent that we would not only be building on the successes realized in the previous strategic plan, but also on a series of transformational accomplishments brought about by a changing library landscape.

In the previous strategic plan, AACPL sought to improve and expand learning and enrichment opportunities offered through our programs, services and collections in a meaningful way that would impact the lives of our customers. We also worked to increase the quality of customer experiences at the library, both in our physical and virtual environments. We identified greater efficiencies within existing processes and resources, and pursued additional funding sources to augment services. Included among our many accomplishments during the previous strategic plan years are our strengthened partnerships to enhance programs and services to job seekers and to young children and their caregivers, improved technology infrastructure, upgrades to the library webpage and catalog, an increased social media presence, and customers who were informed and more readily engaged in library advocacy. Our successes served as good groundwork for the new plan.

Much of the planning process took place amidst several significant, positive changes. Largely because of generous funding from Anne Arundel County and the commitment of our dedicated staff, we were able to hire and train 31 new staff, increase and streamline our library hours and greatly expand our early literacy efforts. In January 2014, AACPL opened its doors an additional 200 hours per week and on Sundays at two additional libraries in order to better serve our communities. With the added

hours and staff, in March 2014 we also began offering weekly early literacy programs from trained Early Literacy Specialists at all branches to target our youngest customers and promote school readiness. Additionally, Anne Arundel County provided funding to begin the multi-million dollar project to build a new Annapolis Regional Library, our first step as we embark on a multi-year plan to renovate and rebuild our library buildings.

The Planning Process

Central to the planning process was the participation of AACPL staff from all levels of the organization, the Board of Trustees and the AACPL Foundation Board. A Strategic Plan Steering Committee made up of library staff was formed to guide the undertaking. A number of processes, tools and opportunities for input and feedback informed the plan's development, including brainstorming sessions, assessment tools, analysis, and feedback from staff.

During this time, AACPL also engaged the services of OrangeBoy, Inc., who worked closely with the Steering Committee to perform an analysis of Anne Arundel County as a whole, and more importantly, library customers. A combination of customer survey feedback, demographic analysis and branch library observations was used to identify target audiences at each branch library and to assist with prioritization of library resources throughout the system. These analyses provided insight for the Steering Committee and AACPL leadership so that we might better understand how our current customers are using our libraries and identify opportunities to better serve each community with a focus on the customer experience. With the guidance of OrangeBoy, Inc., we also developed our Brand Promise—Life Expanded—that represents our commitment to our customers and the opportunities they can experience through AACPL.

From all of this information, the Steering Committee identified five strategic initiatives. A cross-section of library staff then served on five Task Forces, one for each strategic initiative, to identify objectives. These ambitious objectives provide the necessary framework for good decision-making and allocation of resources to achieve the strategic initiatives. We also developed Core Values to serve as guiding principles as we work through the plan. These Core Values will be added to the Strategic Plan after they are fully developed.

The strategic initiatives and underlying objectives will be regularly reviewed and revised by both the AACPL leadership and the Task Forces. While we will be looking for an increase in the traditional measures of library success—namely the statistics on library visits, materials borrowed, program attendance and computer usage—we will also be evaluating the levels of customer satisfaction and the positive impact on the community. County residents will clearly see a return on investment in areas such as improved school readiness of children entering Kindergarten, greater access to and training on new technologies, broader awareness of all that the library offers, and a

library whose resources are managed in a way that best meets the needs of the community. Much of the data will be gathered into a more usable dashboard developed by OrangeBoy, Inc. so that we can visually see the positive impact of our efforts. We will continue to be fiscally responsible with the public's resources and strive to maximize efficiencies.

Library Expanded

Customers enjoy an abundance of opportunities through their public libraries. It has become evident that as libraries continue to evolve amidst a changing landscape, we can be more than four walls and a roof surrounding a collection of books. Libraries significantly change lives. Libraries are a place for the community to come together, find commonalities with each other and be enriched by the library's resources. To accomplish this greater purpose, we must continuously adapt how we approach and offer our resources and services. It is essential that libraries offer information in the variety of ways that customers want to access and use it. Libraries increasingly support creation and collaborative work directly within their communities. With so many emerging trends, it is now critical for libraries to be ready to investigate new challenges and opportunities.

With the implementation of the plan, AACPL will grow in its role as a public educational institution by providing resources, services and programs to support and inspire literacy and lifelong learning. We will offer welcoming community gathering spaces and enhance family, cultural and civic life. We will be committed to offering entertainment through materials and programs, as well as further enhancing the customer experience, both in our libraries and virtually. Our efforts will also go beyond the walls of our buildings as we reach out to all county residents to make them more aware of the free services and resources available at their public library. Through increased engagement with community stakeholders, we will proactively position ourselves to meet the unique needs of the communities served by each of our libraries.

AACPL has a strong tradition of excellent customer service and an outstanding commitment of our dedicated staff. This strategic plan builds on that solid footing and our past successes, and reflects our organizational values. It allows for the flexibility and innovation that are so critical to our success while keeping the benefit to our customers a priority. Our new strategic plan challenges staff, customers and the community to explore the possibilities for a **Life Expanded**.

Core Values

AACPL Core Values are to be developed by a Library Task Force based upon feedback from all staff in attendance at a series of Town Hall meetings held in the summer of 2014. Once developed, they will be included as an integral part of the Strategic Plan.