communications & connections
WCT ADVISOR

Strategic Planning for Libraries

Our Approach

We are strong believers in the community based planning processes; it can be very effective. Because we are passionate about real collaboration, authentic dialogue and respectful inquiry as critical approaches to effective long-range planning, we are naturally drawn to the *New Planning for Results: the Streamlined Version*. It is a powerful and flexible way to define excellence locally and tailor the method of developing requirements for a specific organization's needs.

At Wiseman Consulting and Training, our specialty is gathering community data with innovative methods ranging from town hall meetings and search conferences to focus groups and community design teams. We believe in developing library staff in the change process as much as possible in order to insure the sustainability of the process. Our goal is to ensure that the library continues to be designed to meet core community needs as defined by its leaders and citizens. When libraries do this they are vibrant institutions with no questions about their relevance and sustainability. The *New Planning for Results* Process leads to libraries being able to align their strategies, goals, and service response to the core community needs. We also use the Managing for Results process to help the implementation planning close the gap between the desired future for the library and its current state.

> The NEW Planning for Results:
> A Streamlined Approach
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> **The Public Library Association has incorporated the experiences and recommendations of librarians who used the earlier version of this planning process, and made an even more effective tool for planning. The NEW Planning for Results presents a process that most libraries can complete in less than six months.**
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> **To learn more: www.ala.org**

We measure the success of our planning projects in several ways; the most dramatic is when a library can lead the passing of referendums or the focused implementation of new products and services that result from the plan. Another way we measure success is the confidence level of the stakeholders that the plan reflects their views and dreams. We measure this with the outcome measures listed in the plan itself or special surveys we create. The most common way is to meet periodically with the staff and board to see what has been implemented and what the impact has been.

Listed below are the key elements of the project. These elements are not rigid but, from our experience, are ones most often found to be useful in getting a solid, workable plan. We provide coaching, offsite planning, and team facilitation to support the planning process. When skill development is needed, we will also provide that to the staff, leadership team and board members.

Key Project Deliverables:

- A flexible planning process consistent with the Public Library Association's *Planning For Results* process geared to the community and local library's specific needs
- Facilitation of all Library Steering Team and Community Planning Team Sessions
- Coaching for library staff and board on the planning process and logistics
- A report on the key themes and issues from community focus groups
- Feedback and assistance on writing the final planning document

Key Planning Process Outcomes:

- Clarify the community's needs and vision
- Identify community needs the library is capable of meeting
- Identify 3-5 library service responses to meet those needs and potential goals/actions to implement the service responses
- Begin the building of agreement in the community of the need for changes in the library's services and facilities
- Create a long range plan authored by the staff that has high degrees of acceptance and credibility by the board, library leaders/staff, and the community

The Planning for Results Process

- Assessing community needs: focus groups, Town Hall Meetings, surveys, interviews etc.
- Determining needs the library Is suitable to deliver or who they can partner with to support
- Prioritizing library service responses (usually 3-5)
- Setting goals and objectives
- Communicating the plan to its stakeholders
- Evaluating the plan's success
- Reviewing and aligning the library's organization design with the plan