



NIAGARA FALLS
PUBLIC LIBRARY

NIAGARA FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY

2024-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN



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Introduction from the Board and CEO



1. INTRODUCTION FROM THE BOARD AND CEO

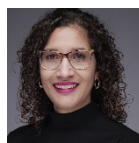
The Niagara Falls Public Library is dedicated to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all members of our community. At the heart of our operations lies the Niagara Falls Public Library Strategic Plan, which reflects our deeply held core values. We firmly believe in the transformative power of knowledge and are passionate about instilling a love for learning within our community. We are committed to creating an inclusive environment that values diversity and provides equal opportunities for everyone to engage with our resources and services.

The strategic plan acts as a comprehensive roadmap that guides our journey toward a future filled with prosperity and impact. Recognizing the integral role we play within the community, our plan centres around four key goals that shape our actions and aspirations. With a rich history that dates to 1878, our vision is deeply rooted in empowering communities, fostering a deep passion for discovery, knowledge, and creative expression.

By aligning our actions with our core values of equity, respect, inclusivity, accountability, empowerment, and intellectual freedom, we endeavour to position the Niagara Falls Public Library as a dynamic and relevant organization that embraces innovation, adapts to evolving community needs, and serves as an indispensable centre for knowledge, culture, and community connection in Niagara Falls and beyond.



Anne Andres-Jones,
Chair, Niagara Falls Public Library Board



Alicia Subnaik Kilgour,
CEO and Chief Librarian, Niagara Falls Public Library



Photo: Niagara Falls Public Library

About Niagara Falls Public Library



2. ABOUT NIAGARA FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Niagara Falls Public Library, established in 1878, provides free and equitable access to collections, programs, and services to meet the evolving needs of the residents of Niagara Falls. We aim to provide a welcoming environment for all at our four locations – Victoria Avenue Library, Stamford Centre Library, Community Centre Library, and Chippawa Library. Our digital resources and website at my.nflibrary.ca are open 24/7 and our NovelBranch Library vending machine provides reading material on-demand to our community.

Our collections and programs are designed to serve our residents at every stage of life: we support literacy for all ages in both traditional and unexpected ways. Through our innovative physical and digital collections and programs, available both in-person and online, our customers will find opportunities to expand their reading, movement, and digital, artistic, and musical literacy.

We are committed to providing excellent customer service to all residents of Niagara Falls.

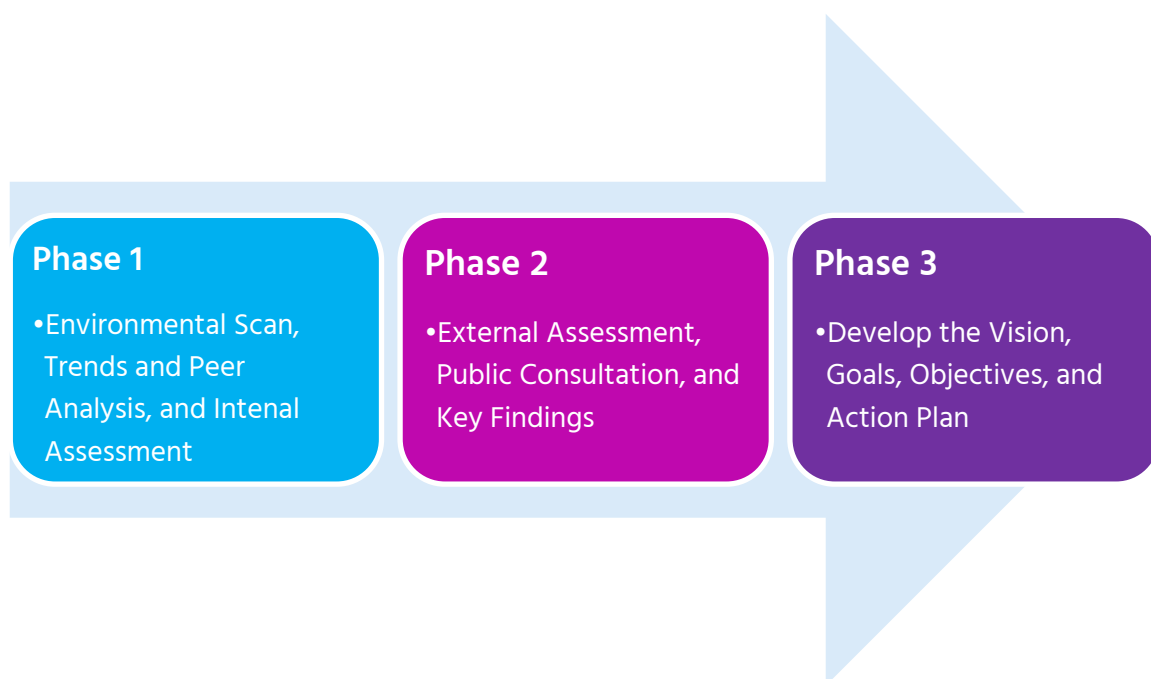


Strategic Planning Process and Methodology



3. STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The strategic planning process was deployed in three phases between June 2022 and May 2023.





PHASE 1:

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN, TRENDS AND PEER ANALYSIS, AND INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Phase 1 included conducting an environmental scan and trend analysis to identify leading practices in North American public libraries. A review of libraries comparable to Niagara Falls Public Library, in terms of size within the Niagara region and Ontario, was developed to understand how similar libraries serve their communities. The final component in Phase 1 was the internal assessment where internal stakeholders – including the CEO, Board members, managers, and staff – participated in interviews and workshops to identify and discuss issues critical to the library.



Phase 2:

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT, PUBLIC CONSULTATION, AND KEY FINDINGS

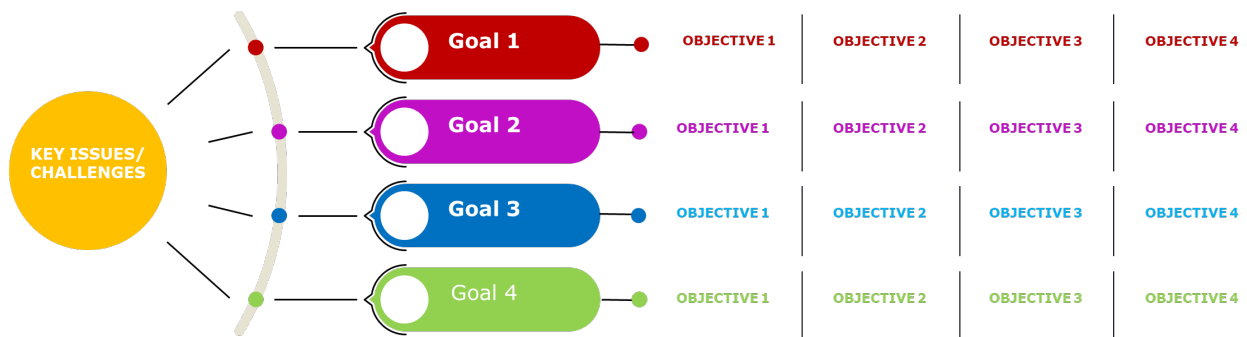
Phase 2 focused on conducting a public consultation process to engage participation and feedback from a representative sampling of the population. This process included interviews and workshops with key stakeholders, an online community survey, and several on-site pop-up surveys in the community. The feedback gathered from the key stakeholders and public consultation were then distilled into key findings describing a series of strengths, challenges, and opportunities. These key findings were distributed to the Board and senior team in advance of two strategic planning workshops where participants deliberated and achieved consensus on manageable and implementable strategic goals.



PHASE 3:

DEVELOP THE VISION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION PLAN

Phase 3 focused on analyzing the feedback and key findings gathered during the strategic planning workshops to draft a set of goals and objectives. Separate workshops focused on developing the Library's vision statement, mission statement, and institutional values.





What We Learned



4. WHAT WE LEARNED

The information gathered from the internal and external assessments was distilled and analyzed to produce the following critical issues. These issues were provided to the Library's Board and senior team in advance of the strategic planning workshops.



4.1 KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 1** **The Library must position itself more effectively** as a vital, relevant, innovative, and forward-thinking organization that serves an important function in the city and for the community.
- 2** **The broader community and non-users of the Library** are not fully aware of all the services the Library has to offer. The perception is that the Library is still just a place to borrow physical books.
- 3** **The Library has not been effectively reaching out** to meet the needs of some of the city's underserved communities, specifically youth/teens and newcomers. There needs to be a stronger connection to the schools with greater resources allocated for student learning and literacy.
- 4** **Staffing is not as structured as it should be.** Customer service staff in particular has been negatively impacted by the pandemic and continually face challenges to serve and meet the needs of Niagara Falls' marginalized communities.
- 5** **The Library must prioritize its activities, programs, and services** based on budget, resources, institutional mission, vision, and strategic direction.
- 6** **There are facility challenges throughout the system** including major capital cost repairs needed at Victoria Avenue, an extended closure at Stamford Centre, and a small and accessibility-challenged location at Chippawa.
- 7** **The Library is impacted by the reliance on and importance of digital.** The Library desires to be more innovative with new technology and systems and wants to reassess what services are vital to address the needs of the community.



Photo: Niagara Falls Public Library

Goals and Objectives



5. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Board and senior team each participated in a strategic planning workshop to explore and discuss the key issues and begin working towards developing the strategic goals. The workshops produced thoughtful, robust, and creative deliberations on developing goals that are both manageable and achievable. The senior team achieved consensus on the following four strategic goals, with each goal having several actionable objectives.



GOAL 1

POSITIONING AND AWARENESS

Position the Library as a vital, relevant, innovative, and forward-thinking organization in the community.

The Niagara Falls Public Library plays an essential role in the city by providing free access to information, community resources and social services, and supporting literacy and education both online and in the locations. The challenge, however, is that the broader community and non-library users perceive the library to be an anachronism – an institution that has not changed with the times and is still a place to “just take out books.”

The Library must tell its own story. It must effectively communicate its adaptability, its vitality, and relevance. The goal is to not necessarily convert non-library users into users, but rather to garner support for the Library as a valuable community asset critical to maintaining a healthy, vibrant, and livable city.

OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate the Library’s economic and social value using evidence-based data.
2. Identify the Library’s strengths and relevance to stakeholders.
3. Seek ways to increase the community’s awareness of the Library’s collections, programs, and services.



GOAL 2

OUTREACH AND CONNECTION

Create effective, targeted outreach strategies to address the needs of the residents of Niagara Falls.

Niagara Falls is a growing and increasingly diverse community. Multiple factors - library locations are geographically dispersed, one location is temporarily closed for construction, public transit is limited, and a global pandemic which forced most residents to shutter indoors and highlighted the digital disparity – has put undue pressure on the Library to reach out to the city’s vulnerable communities.

The Library needs to find new ways to effectively reach out to equity deserving groups who have been historically marginalized and strengthen its ties with the city’s underserved residents including youth/teens and newcomers to the city.

OBJECTIVES

1. Reassess current outreach practices to determine gaps and identify new approaches to connect with the community.
2. Strengthen the Library’s connection with teens, older adults, and newcomers.
3. Prioritize how to support vulnerable and underserved communities given the Library’s current resources and infrastructure.



GOAL 3

ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH

Continue to develop a healthy work culture prepared to serve a growing and increasingly diverse population.

Like many urban centres across the country, Niagara Falls is confronting the challenges of homelessness and addiction amongst its most vulnerable population. The Library is a welcoming place open to all and is a refuge for many. Yet, Library staff – and customer service personnel in particular – are struggling to serve their needs.

Staff are empathetic, compassionate, and dedicated to serving everyone in the community. However, the current organizational structure includes policies and tightly defined roles and responsibilities that are contributing to excessive strain on Library staff.

The Library will work toward initiating systems, structures, and programs to create and support a healthy and resilient workforce that will empower staff to meet future challenges and confidently and effectively serve everyone in the community.

OBJECTIVES

1. Foster a positive and equitable workplace.
2. Continue to support the health and well-being of staff.
3. Build a sound and future-ready organizational structure.



GOAL 4

ACCESS AND TECHNOLOGY

Build on the Library's technology strengths to showcase digital initiatives and opportunities.

The Library has significant in-house technology expertise across departments. Staff are passionate about finding innovative ways to use technology to improve internal operations and to empower the community according to its needs.

The Library will prioritize using technology both internally to support data-informed decision-making, and externally to encourage the community to use technology to learn, create, and innovate and to expand access to collections, programs and services.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop initiatives to empower the community to use technology to learn, create, and innovate.
2. Leverage technology to improve access to collections, programs, and services.
3. Continue to support staff efforts to establish internal data reporting systems to inform operations.
4. Identify the resources required to achieve the library's technology goals.



Photo: Niagara Falls Public Library

Vision, Mission, and Values



6. VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

The Board and senior team each participated in an additional workshop to develop vision and mission statements and to establish a set of guiding values for the institution.



VISION STATEMENT

To empower communities and inspire the pursuit of discovery, knowledge, and creativity.





MISSION STATEMENT

A gateway to information –
through awareness, connection,
service, and access to
technology – fostering
community enrichment for all.





INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

Equity

Empowering all through equitable access and opportunities.

Respect

Embracing everyone with courtesy and dignity.

Inclusivity

Cultivating a nurturing and non-judgemental environment.

Accountability

Ensuring transparency, public trust, and responsible stewardship.

Empowerment

Enabling lifelong learning, igniting potential, fostering growth, and creativity.

Intellectual Freedom

Subscribing to an open exchange of information and ideas in a democratic society.



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Strategic Plan produced in collaboration with Lord Cultural Resources

Lord
Cultural Resources