

LUCIUS BEEBE MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Where Wakefield Connects



STRATEGIC PLAN FISCAL YEARS 2021–2025

Submitted by:



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Lucius Beebe Memorial Library Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2021–2025

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INTRODUCTION

The current Lucius Beebe Memorial Library is significantly different from the “book repository” it was when founded in 1856. It continues to maintain a traditional collection of books, but it also provides access to an ever-expanding collection of physical and digital resources and materials. It offers programs and services that educate and entertain all ages and is staffed by knowledgeable, library professionals committed to providing high quality service. Most significantly, the library serves as a free, centrally located community gathering place.

While Beebe Library has experienced much success, it recognizes it must continually respond to its community’s current needs; must innovate and operate as efficiently and effectively as possible; and must anticipate and creatively tackle potential challenges.

To this end, Beebe Library developed a pragmatic, customized roadmap that extends the library’s success through the next five years and beyond. The library’s *Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2021 – 2025* is designed to be flexible. It is a dynamic, aspirational plan that accommodates unanticipated changes that may occur throughout its term.

Lucius Beebe Memorial Library’s *Strategic Plan* includes:

- An overview of the planning process;
- The library’s vision and mission statements;
- The multi-year goals and objectives; and
- A list of prioritized tactics (activities) that directly support the library’s vision, mission, and goals.

Successful public libraries thrive when they evolve to meet their respective community’s changing needs and expectations. Beebe Library seeks to exceed its community’s expectations and is pleased to present its plan to do so.

OUR PROCESS

In September of 2018, the library hired strategic planning consultant Barbara Alevras of Sage Consulting Services to guide us through the planning process, facilitate a series of planning exercises, oversee the collection and analysis of performance data and community feedback, and assist with drafting the strategic plan document.

To launch the project, we established our planning goals, identified specific tasks, and scheduled deliverable milestones. We created a detailed process flowchart (see *Appendix A—Strategic Planning Process Flowchart*) to serve as a visual roadmap of our planning activities.

We also drafted a document that presents an overview of Wakefield’s demographics and the library’s offerings. It includes information about the library’s history, operations, and governance, as well as activity statistics and progress on its current strategic plan (see *Appendix B—2019 Community and Library Profile*).

In January of 2019, we formed a 13-person Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC) with representatives from numerous community organizations and constituencies. The group supported the library’s strategic planning project by:

- Brainstorming community vision statements describing the ideal Wakefield;
- Prioritizing the vision statements the library can best support with its activities (see *Appendix C—Community Vision Statements*); and
- Reviewing internal and community feedback.

Several SPAC participants provided additional input and support by participating in various other strategic planning activities.

Throughout the spring, the library solicited feedback through a variety of means to assess its current performance and identify future needs. The library conducted:

- One Community Visioning Exercise;
- Two Strengths-Opportunity-Aspirations-Results (SOAR) Exercises;
- Two Surveys; and
- Two Focus Groups.

After collecting feedback, the data was analyzed, synthesized, and summarized.

OUR RESULTS

A thorough review of the data received from more than 370 people provided insights regarding staff and community perceptions of the current library and expectations for its future. Input received helped us identify the library’s strengths and challenges, as well as numerous creative ideas for ways the library can meet the community’s needs going forward.

Potential new and improved initiatives suggested via our various feedback mechanisms relate to the following seven categories:

- **COLLECTIONS:** Interest in a larger, more diverse book collection and the expansion of the non-traditional “Library of Things” collection.
- **FACILITY:** Requests for more parking (standard and handicapped) and additional study/meeting rooms.
- **MARKETING:** Desire for expanded, strengthened outreach, and increased community awareness of the library’s value and offerings.
- **OPERATIONS:** A small number of respondents suggested expanding the operating hours.
- **PROGRAMS:** Hundreds of new program ideas submitted for all ages and requests for some to be scheduled during non-working hours. Interest in more opportunities to socialize/network and for additional STEAM/technology-related children’s programs.

- **SERVICES:** Need expressed for more museum passes and for the library to serve as the community’s resource for information about local services (mental health, government, elections, etc.).
- **TECHNOLOGY:** Requests for more hardware offerings (loan more tech devices, additional computers), improved website offerings (streaming/digital services), and expanded technology instructional information (e.g., what’s available, training, and tech support).

Where possible, ideas received were incorporated into the library’s *Strategic Plan* and its *Action Plan*.

While the feedback received was overwhelmingly positive, we asked community survey respondents to share the biggest barrier to service—something that prevents them from using the library or its resources. Inadequate parking was identified as the biggest barrier to service; it exceeded all the other responses combined.

Other barrier categories mentioned include:

- **ONLINE RESOURCES CHALLENGES:** Respondents expressed a limited awareness of online resources, a desire for more instructions for use of online resources, and disappointment in the variety of online collection offerings.
- **INSUFFICIENT PROGRAMS:** Respondents indicated a desire for children’s programs during non-working hours and stated there are limited programs targeting pre-K children and teens.
- **TECHNOLOGY FRUSTRATIONS:** Respondents mentioned website dissatisfaction and an inadequate supply of on-site computers.
- **GENERAL CHALLENGES:** Respondents who don’t visit or use the library shared assorted reasons why: library hours are limited/inconvenient; unaware of library offerings; and/or lack the time/need to use.

Many of these perceived barriers are the result of a lack of accurate information about the library and its services, which has been a consideration in forming goals of the *Strategic Plan*.

Feedback results are available for review as appendices to this document (see *Appendices* on page 9). The target audience(s) and the number of participants per feedback mechanism are presented in *Appendix A—Strategic Planning Process Flowchart*.

OUR PLAN

Vision Statements

The library’s *Strategic Plan* supports the following top three community vision statements:

Top Three Community Vision Statements

Wakefield offers diverse, innovative learning opportunities in safe community locations.

Wakefield sponsors and effectively promotes a robust schedule of cultural activities and programs that appeal to all ages.

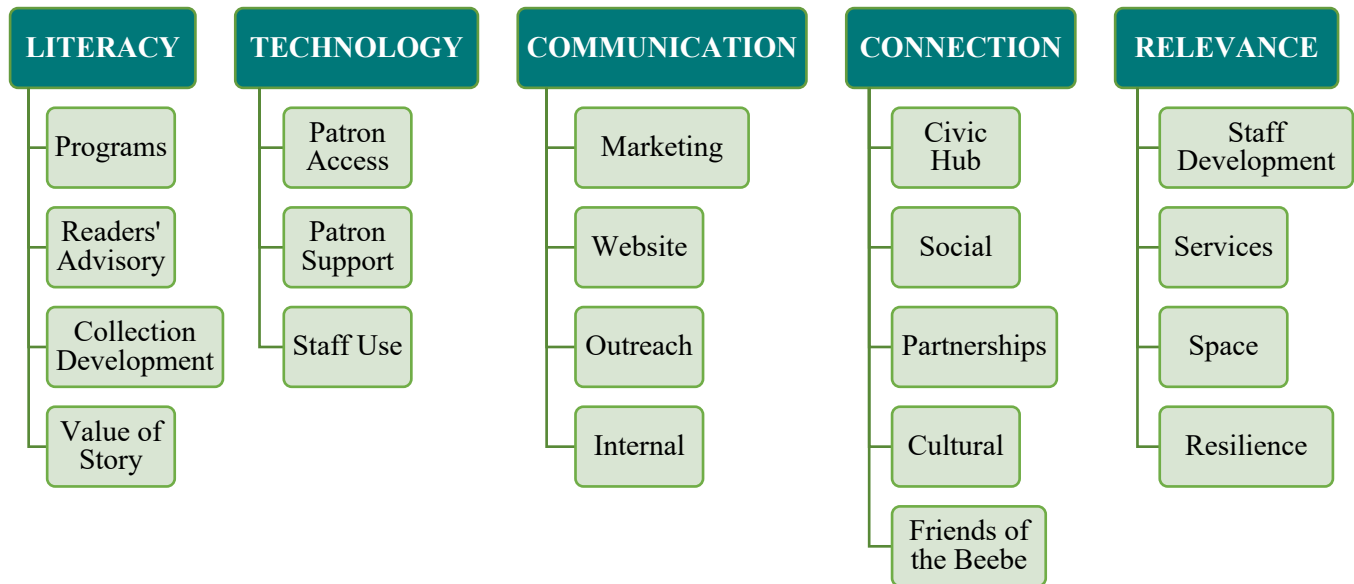
Wakefield values and provides high quality, collaborative education that enhances residents' ability to compete in the real world.

Mission Statement

To engage our community in lifelong learning that builds knowledge and promotes understanding.

Visual Strategy

We identified five key areas of focus with primary areas of activity to create the following visual strategy:



Goals and Objectives

The following list of strategic goals and supporting objectives indicates how the library plans to support the community vision statements and mission statement. Meeting these goals and objectives will enable the library to effectively prioritize and allocate resources during the next five years.

GOAL 1: Champion literacy and the value of reading for all ages and abilities.

- 1.1 Offer a range of literacy-based programming that provides skills and information to build and develop readers.
- 1.2 Deliver Readers' Advisory programs and services.
- 1.3 Develop a collection that satisfies the needs of the community.
- 1.4 Provide intergenerational programs and opportunities that highlight the value of stories.

GOAL 2: Foster proficiency in technology and information literacy skills.

- 2.1 Expand and enhance public access to technology and trusted information.
- 2.2 Support patrons in adapting to and using new technology.
- 2.3 Evaluate the roles and options of technology in the library organization's work.

GOAL 3: Increase visibility and awareness of library services and programs.

- 3.1 Develop a marketing plan that leverages existing branding and is built on best practices in the marketing field.
- 3.2 Improve the website based on usability evaluation. Produce a site that remains current in the most efficient way.
- 3.3 Expand outreach to include new and underserved constituencies.
- 3.4 Further develop the collaborative staff environment through more effective communication.

GOAL 4: Build connections that strengthen our communities.

- 4.1 Leverage the library's reputation as a neutral, welcoming place-for-all to tackle tough questions.
- 4.2 Promote the Main Street building as a viable location for social engagement.
- 4.3 Develop partnerships that advance goals of both the partners and the library.
- 4.4 Offer patrons arts and humanities programming and services that expand their world.
- 4.5 Leverage the unique position of the Friends of Beebe Library as library partner and advocate.

GOAL 5: Remain relevant to the community, adapting to an ever-changing environment.

- 5.1 Empower staff to model lifelong learning, updating skills to complement new trends and roles. Provide training and support to implement new approaches and promote innovation.
- 5.2 Perform continuous evaluation and analysis of services and their supporting resources.
- 5.3 Plan building space and enhancements that complement use. Keep the facility warm and welcoming.
- 5.4 Advocate for sufficient resources to sustain high quality service. Improve flexibility to ensure a resilient service plan.

Annual Action Plans

Each year, the library develops an *Action Plan* for the following fiscal year. This tactical plan identifies new, finite initiatives and activities, but does not include ongoing operational or administrative tasks. It presents a list of specific tasks that support the Library's efforts to achieve its strategic goals during this *Strategic Plan's* term.

The *Action Plan* is a dynamic document. It is flexible enough to accommodate ad hoc revisions that address unanticipated changes, evolving needs, and fluctuating resources. It will be updated annually. To view the Action Plan for next fiscal year, see *Appendix F—Lucius Beebe Memorial Library Action Plan Fiscal Year 2021*.

Measuring and Communicating Our Progress

To ensure steady progress towards achieving the *Strategic Plan's* goals, the Library Director will review the progress made towards achieving the *Strategic Plan's* goals and objectives monthly, including identifying completed *Action Plan* tasks. The Director will share the *Strategic Plan's* review results with staff at department meetings.

Quarterly, the Library Director will report to the Board of Library Trustees on progress made towards achieving the *Strategic Plan's* goals and objectives. In addition, the Director will include strategic plan performance highlights from the calendar year in her annual Town Report.

The *Strategic Plan* will be available on the Library's website.

TRUSTEES' APPROVAL

On June 19, 2019, Lucius Beebe Memorial Library's nine-person Board of Trustees approved this *Strategic Plan* unanimously.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Beebe Library staff, library volunteers, and Wakefield community members contributed to the library's *Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2021–2025* over the course of several months.

We appreciate the valuable input provided by the staff, Board of Trustees, and Friends of Beebe Library Board. We are especially grateful for the time, invaluable feedback, and support received from the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee and the Wakefield community.

The Lucius Beebe Memorial Library is committed to increasing its value to the entire Wakefield community. It seeks to expand upon its traditional roots by offering interesting and innovative new programs and services. Beebe Library is confident this *Strategic Plan* will help it achieve its mission.

APPENDICES

Appendix A—Strategic Planning Process Flowchart: The flowchart visually depicts the library’s planning methodology, including the timeline, assessment mechanisms, and process participants.

Appendix B—2019 Community and Library Profile: This document served as an orientation resource for the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC), including a demographic profile of Wakefield and a description of the library’s services and programs.

Appendix C—Community Vision Statements: After the SPAC brainstormed a series of community vision statements reflecting the ideal Wakefield, it identified and prioritized the vision statements that the library can reasonably and positively impact.

Appendix D—SOAR Analysis Summary: This report documents the results of an environmental assessment of the LBML’s strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results.

Appendix E—Community Survey Results: The community survey was conducted for three weeks in March 2019 via SurveyMonkey. The raw data and narrative comments are presented in addition to summary graphs and charts.

Appendix F—Lucius Beebe Memorial Library Action Plan Fiscal Year 2021: The library’s *Action Plan* presents specific tasks for completion during the first year of the *Strategic Plan*.