

## **YOUR LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN A GUIDE TO ITS DEVELOPMENT**

### **BACKGROUND**

It is a requirement of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the State Library of Queensland and Local Governments that library goals and objectives are reflected in a strategic plan. These plans are often referred to by a variety of names, including “Strategic Plans”, “Corporate Plans”, “Business Plans”, “Operational Plans” and so on. A library’s strategic plan should either form part of or be consistent with the planning process of the Council in which it belongs.

In developing your library plan, it will be helpful to understand some common terms used in Queensland Local Government. A Corporate Plan is required by each council under the Local Government Act (LGA) 1993 and sets the overall direction of Council for at least a four-year period. This document does not usually contain much detail on each section of Council’s operations. An Operational Plan is also required under the Act, and is a one-year action plan, usually developed to align with the financial year. An Operational Plan is more likely to contain more detailed information on Council operations such as libraries. Both of these plans have defined timeframes set by the Act. A variety of plans usually sit under the Corporate and Operational Plans, often dealing with single areas of operations, and are usually referred to as Business Plans.

### **WHAT WILL THE LIBRARY PLAN LOOK LIKE?**

Your library plan may be a separate document just for the Library Service, or it may take the form of a number of strategies listed within the relevant section of the overall Council Corporate or Operational Plan. Again, State Library does not require any specific format for our purposes.

If material contained within the Corporate and Operational Plan has sufficient detail to form a Library Strategic Plan, then simply highlight the relevant section and forward this to State Library. If the information in the current plan is insufficient for this purpose, remember there is an opportunity to participate in the next planning process with a view to developing appropriate input from the library in the Corporate Plan. If you choose to develop a Library Strategic Plan from scratch, you will need to ensure that it is consistent with and complements Council’s current plans.

Whichever option is chosen, it is important to show linkages between the library and the Council’s broad goals and objectives. These linkages can take the form of matching major library strategies to the appropriate Council goal, or perhaps there may be a special page which spells out the library’s major functions and how they relate to general Council goals.

Strategic plans should give direction to the library’s activities for a defined period of time but they can vary greatly with respect to the period they cover. Some may list strategies for the next one, three, five or more years. For the purpose of complying with the Service Level Agreement, the plan you develop can relate to any timeframe and be named whatever your council prefers. It is preferable, however, that your plan fits in with the timeframe of the Council’s plans.

Whichever format or timeframe is chosen, it is essential that your library plans be endorsed by Council and incorporated into their plans, to demonstrate their legitimacy and consistency with broad Council goals.

## **BENEFITS OF DEVELOPING A LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN**

- You will be complying with the SLA.
- It will encourage more strategic thinking and planning and provide a framework for the future.
- It will strengthen your position within Council by providing formal recognition of library services and the contribution they make to the community.
- It provides an opportunity to showcase specific ways in which the library supports the achievement of Council's broader goals and objectives.

## **HOW TO DEVELOP A LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN**

In developing your plan, a good starting point is to familiarise yourself with Council's current planning documents, especially the Corporate and Operational Plans. Next, contact the relevant person in your Council who is responsible for coordinating the Corporate Planning process. This officer will be able to advise you about relevant stakeholders and the planning process. If your library has not been included in this process to date, you could discuss opportunities for involvement.

The next step is to involve others in developing a vision with accompanying goals and objectives for your library service. If you have this in place already, you should review the current plan. In developing your plan, you will need to consider the big picture and whether your plan is consistent with and complements the Council's goals and objectives.

The library plan should include some reference to the library's core services as well as any special objectives, events or highlights during the planning period. Consideration should be given to influences which the external environment may have on the library. For example, if the population of the community is expected to grow significantly during the planning period, plans for the library service should reflect this.

Preparation of the plan should include consultation with all library staff, across all branches of the library service, as their input is extremely important to the relevancy of the plan and ownership of the strategies.

You will also have a much better outcome if you engage stakeholders within your community when developing your plan. These will include internal stakeholders such as Councillors and Council staff and external stakeholders including library users, community and business groups, schools, seniors groups etc. Ideally, they should be engaged throughout the planning process, to help promote the broadest thinking and to ensure the most appropriate strategies are included.

## **ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

As mentioned above, strategic plans can take a number of forms and can vary in their level of detail. In general, however, a plan should include goals, strategies and targets or performance measures. The following definitions for these elements may be helpful.

**GOALS:** Goals describe what is to be achieved. Goals can be either general or specific.

**STRATEGIES:** Strategies describe the way in which goals will be achieved. They are generally high level activities which represent the focus of the library's work during the planning period.

**TARGETS /PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**

Targets or performance measures describe what it is specifically that will be achieved. They provide a means of judging whether or not the library has met its goals. They should be realistic and achievable and should be measurable. They should not be too difficult or time-consuming to measure or collect.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Once you have developed a strategic plan, you may like to consider some possible next steps:

- Use the plan as the basis for a regular report to your Council outlining achievements and future activities.
- Place the library's strategic plan on your library web site if you have one.
- Make sure your strategic plan is mentioned on the Council's web site.
- Consider ways to promote the Plan to your internal and external communities.
- Run in-house information sessions so that the broadest possible audience are aware of and supportive of the plan. This is particularly important where you have identified collaboration or involvement from other areas of Council.

For further assistance contact:

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**SCROLL DOWN TO VIEW A SAMPLE TEMPLATE AND SAMPLE STRATEGIC PLAN.**

## SAMPLE TEMPLATE

*This template is provided as a sample suggestion only, to assist in the development of plans. There is no requirement to follow this particular format.*

### LIBRARY SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN TIME PERIOD COVERED (Enter as applicable)

GOALS	STRATEGIES	TARGETS
<b>GOAL 1:</b>    	<b>Strategy 1.1:</b>   <b>Strategy 1.2:</b>	Targets 1.1: • • • Targets 1.2: • • •
<b>GOAL 2:</b>    	<b>Strategy 2.1:</b>   <b>Strategy 2.2:</b>	Targets 2.1: • • • Targets 2.2: • •
<b>GOAL 3:</b>    	<b>Strategy 3.1:</b>   <b>Strategy 3.2:</b>   <b>Strategy 3.3:</b>	Targets 3.1: • • • Targets 3.2: • • • Targets 3.3: • • •
<b>GOAL 4:</b>    	<b>Strategy 4.1:</b>	Targets 4.1: • • •

## SAMPLE STRATEGIC PLAN

*This sample plan is provided as an example only, to assist in the development of your council plans. There is no requirement to follow this particular format. The content of your plan should be specific to your local needs and environment and should not copy the following suggested wording.*

### STRATEGIC PLAN FOR LIBRARY SERVICES TIME PERIOD COVERED (Enter as applicable)

#### SHIRETON LIBRARY SERVICE

GOALS	STRATEGIES	TARGETS
<p><b>GOAL 1:</b></p> <p>Provide free access to library and information services which assist in meeting the recreational, informational and cultural needs of the Shireton community.</p>	<p><b>Strategy 1.1:</b> Continue to provide and maintain resource collections which are responsive to the varying needs of the community.</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2:</b> Develop and promote a wide range of free services to all sectors of the community.</p>	<p>Targets 1.1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased loans of materials</li> <li>Development of appropriate collections in a wide range of formats.</li> </ul> <p>Targets 1.2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well patronised set of library outreach services, activities and programs.</li> <li>Increased awareness and usage of library services, particularly by target groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GOAL 2:</b></p> <p>Provide library facilities appropriate to the needs of the population of the Shireton community.</p>	<p><b>Strategy 2.1:</b> Plan and design the newly approved branch at Shearer's Crossing, ready for its proposed opening in early 2010.</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.2:</b> Establish a facilities management plan for the existing three branch libraries, including timetabling of maintenance and repair.</p>	<p>Targets 2.1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Branch library completed on schedule and within budget</li> <li>Increased membership and usage from the Shearer's Crossing district.</li> <li>Increased community awareness of library services.</li> <li>A building well regarded by clients which supports the delivery of dynamic library services.</li> </ul> <p>Targets 2.2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved turnover time for rectification of maintenance problems.</li> <li>Consistency in standard of physical facilities across the library service.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GOAL 3:</b></p> <p>Provide appropriate</p>	<p><b>Strategy 3.1:</b> With assistance from Council's IT team, establish</p>	<p>Targets 3.1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPAC established on schedule</li> </ul>

<p>access to online service for the Shireton community.</p>	<p>a web-based OPAC by mid 2010.</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.2:</b> Enhance the library's website, improving interactivity, ease of use and reflection of current community interests.</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.3</b> Increase the number of public access internet terminals to 6 by 30 June 2010.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider and easier accessibility to the library's catalogue</li> <li>• Facilitation of increased user interactivity and self-service in circulation functions.</li> </ul> <p>Targets 3.2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased user satisfaction through easy access to important information</li> <li>• Improved community awareness of library services, hours, policies etc.</li> </ul> <p>Targets 3.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers of terminals increased by deadline</li> <li>• Improved community access to online format information</li> <li>• Reduced waiting times to access internet in library.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GOAL 4:</b> Ensure that library services and resources continue to maximise responsiveness to client needs.</p>	<p><b>Strategy 4.1:</b> Develop and conduct an annual community survey of both library users and non-users to determine satisfaction with library services, and to identify community suggestions for new developments and services.</p>	<p>Targets 4.1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey undertaken annually as per schedule</li> <li>• Informed future planning for the development and direction of library services</li> <li>• Improved community liaison</li> <li>• Enhanced community engagement.</li> </ul>