



Strategic Plan 2025-2028

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Introduction

The Wilmington Public Library 2025-2028 Strategic Plan provides a path for Wilmington Public Library to focus on enhancing services, expanding access, and deepening community engagement over the next three years. The plan is crafted with the intention of meeting the evolving needs of our patrons and embracing the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Our aim is to transform the library into a dynamic community resource that fosters learning, creativity, and personal growth through the strategic directions, objectives, and activities identified. We are committed to helping empower community members with the resources, tools, and opportunities they need to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

Vision

A formal declaration of the library's aspirations and long term goals.

We are the hub for connection, curiosity, and creativity, providing safe, inclusive spaces where individuals can enhance their skills, explore new interests, and expand their understanding of the world.

Core Values

Core values are principles that guide every aspect of the library's staff's work.

Compassionate

We are a patron centered institution focused on community needs and responding with empathy and care.

Engaged

We actively listen to our community's priorities, interests, and values. We adapt our collections, programs, and outreach to best serve all patrons.

Inclusive

We develop our collections, programs, and outreach to serve all people of Clinton County and beyond.

Stability

We are committed to providing consistent access to our resources and services that support our community's needs.

Tradition

We acknowledge the importance of tradition to our community by providing a safe space to pass on experiences from generation to generation.

Strategic Plan for 2025-2028

Wilmington Public Library's new strategic plan is organized in three strategic directions: Development, Expanding Access, and Community Outreach. Under each of these strategic directions are objectives (what we want to do) and activities (how we will do it). The Strategic Planning Committee used an Importance/Difficulty Matrix to prioritize the activities identified during the design phase. The Implementation Plan section of this document presents the activities over the next three calendar years based on the Importance/Difficulty Matrix discussions.

Strategic Direction: Development

Refine existing and identify new services, collections, and spaces to meet the priorities, interests, and needs of the community.

Objective: Expand Adult Programming

Expanding adult programming is aimed at enriching and diversifying the offerings available to the community. These programs help bridge the digital divide, provide practical benefits that enhance daily living, stimulate intellectual curiosity, and help to foster a deeper connection among community members with the library.

Activities:

- Expand adult computer classes offered.
- Add adult life skill classes (e.g., budgeting, finances, cooking, sewing, etc.).
- Host experts to deliver masterclasses on specific topics (e.g., gardening, making sushi, photography, etc.).

Objective: Create Opportunities for Enrichment

Creating opportunities for enrichment centers on transforming the library into a hub for creativity and personal development. We will designate spaces and provide tools that allow patrons of all ages to create and innovate. We will also enhance the physical comfort of the library to allow patrons to immerse themselves fully in the many enriching experiences the library offers.

Activities:

- Add comfortable seating areas.
- Develop a Library of Things collection.
- Create a dedicated teen space.
- Create a makerspace.

Strategic Direction: Expanding Access

Broaden access to library materials outside of the library.

Objective: Convenient Access

Providing convenient access focuses on making library resources more readily available to a wider audience, regardless of their physical proximity to the library building. By implementing services that bring books and other materials directly into the community, the library significantly reduces barriers to access. This will allow patrons to enjoy the benefits of the library's collections with greater ease and flexibility while enhancing their ability to engage with educational and recreational materials.

Activities:

- Curate more pocket collections.
- Develop a robust home delivery service.
- Establish additional satellite collections around the county.
- Create a mobile book collection that travels to set locations on a regular basis.

Strategic Direction: Community Outreach

Extending services beyond the the library walls.

Objective: Connect with the Community

Connecting with the community aims to broaden its patronage by becoming more visible and actively engaged in local events. This will allow library staff to better understand and meet existing and new needs moving forward.

Conversely, this will allow the library to promote its services and resources directly to community members that may not currently use the library.

Activities:

- The library is present at community events around the county (e.g., table, parade entry, staff wearing library branded clothing, etc.).
- Hire a Community Outreach Coordinator.

Objective: Collaborate with Other Groups

Collaborating with other groups is focused on creating partnerships to enhance and expand the library's impact within the community. By working closely with local educational institutions, other local non-profit organizations and literacy-focused groups, the library can create more inclusive and far- reaching programs that address the diverse needs of the community. These collaborations enrich the library's offerings, making it possible to develop unique educational and recreational opportunities that might not be possible.

Activities:

- Create a Story Walk with Wilmington Parks C Rec.
- Partner with Friends of the Library and Clinton County Literacy Foundation with existing and/or new “little free libraries.”
- Collaborate with other organizations in the county to reach potential new patrons and expand awareness of our resources and services.
- Develop a stronger relationship with Wilmington City Schools.

Implementation Plan

The Strategist used an Importance/Difficulty Matrix to facilitate a discussion of potential activities identified during the Exploration Summit and by Strategic Planning Committee members. Activities were first arranged on the horizontal axis from low importance (far left) to high importance (far right). Every activity had to have its own location on the horizontal axis.

Next, the Strategist led committee members through a discussion of difficulty to do the activity. Activities were arranged on the vertical axis from the most difficult (very top) to the least difficult (very bottom). Every activity had to have its own location on the vertical axis. During the discussion, some activities were refined while others were removed from further consideration for this strategic plan.

The result of using this design method is the arrangement of activities into four quadrants: Best Bets (those with the highest Return on Investment), Low Hanging Fruit (Quick Wins), Strategic, and Luxury (those with the lowest Return on Investment). A graphic of the Importance/Difficulty four quadrants is provided below.



The activities listed above under the three strategic directions are listed below by implementation year based on the Importance/Difficulty Matrix. Activities are listed in order of importance as identified by the Strategic Planning Committee based on the Importance/Difficulty Matrix.

2025 Activities

1. Create a dedicated teen space.
2. Develop a Library of Things collection.
3. The library is present at community events around the county (e.g., table, parade entry, staff wearing library branded clothing, etc.).
4. Collaborate with other organizations in the county to reach new patrons and expand awareness of our resources and services.
5. Expand adult computer classes.
6. Add adult life skill classes (e.g., budgeting, finances, cooking, sewing, etc.).
7. Begin to develop a relationship with Wilmington City Schools

2026 Activities

1. Create a makerspace.
2. Develop a robust home delivery service.
3. Strengthen the relationship with Wilmington City Schools
4. Host experts to deliver masterclasses on specific topics (e.g., gardening, making sushi, photography, etc.).
5. Curate more pocket collections.
6. Add more comfortable chairs to the building.
7. Create a Story Walk with Wilmington Parks C Rec.

2027 Activities

1. Hire Community Outreach Coordinator.
2. Maintain a strong relationship with Wilmington City Schools.
3. Create a mobile book collection that travels to set locations on a regular basis.
4. Partner with Friends of the Library and Clinton County Literacy Foundation with existing and/or new “Little Free Libraries.”
5. Establish additional satellite collections around the county.

Additional Activities Identified

During the design phase, the Strategic Planning Committee discussed the following activities but opted to not include them as part of the new strategic plan. They are included here to document that they were discussed during the current process and for potential consideration in a future strategic plan.

There is the potential over the next three years that some of these activities may be more appropriate to include as part of other activities identified to meet the objectives within the three strategic directions. The Library Director will decide if any of these activities become more relevant and if the library has the capacity to do them.

- Add solar panels to the main library building's roof, lawn, or parking lot to reduce electricity costs.
- Create a library garden on the south or west side of the main library building.
- Develop a stronger relationship with Wilmington College.
- Host more writing groups.
- Expand after hours programming for adults, youth, and children.
- Host adult tabletop role playing game groups.
- Invite local musicians to perform and discuss their music.

Summary of Planning Process

Wilmington Public Library worked with one of OhioNet's human-centered Strategists to facilitate a strategic planning process that included an exploration into the library's existing strengths, values, and successes. Rooted in appreciative inquiry, OhioNet's EXPLORE model (see below) for strategic planning centers on inclusive and collaborative dialogue with stakeholders. This allows for everyone to have a voice in the process and helps to ensure that strategic opportunities are aligned with community needs.



The Library Director assembled a nine person Strategic Planning Committee, which included representatives from all areas of the library. OhioNet's Strategist held an initial orientation meeting with the Strategic Planning Committee to review the process and to brainstorm a list of key stakeholders with whom Strategic Planning Committee members would conduct personal interviews.

Strategic Planning Committee members interviewed forty-two key stakeholders and forty-one additional community members completed an online survey. The interviews and survey form asked questions designed to explore what Wilmington Public Library does well and should continue doing, as well as trends, dreams, opportunities, and wishes for the library's future.

The Strategist compiled the outputs of the interviews and survey responses into an Exploration Book to be used at a five hour Exploration Summit. Strategic Planning Committee members, Board of Trustee members, library

staff, and other key stakeholders gathered on a Saturday morning to review the Exploration Book and engage in dialogue. Rather than each participant reading the entire contents of the Exploration Book, the Strategist distributed pages of snapshots among the participants. The snapshots, written in the first person, served as proxy for the stakeholders interviewed or who completed the online survey and brought their thoughts into the process without them being physically present.

During the Exploration Summit, stakeholder snapshots were reviewed, followed by small group conversation in which themes and patterns were identified across the various snapshots. Finally, all themes, from all groups, were posted to create a map of the library's "positive core values." A similar method was used to identify themes for strategic opportunities in an "opportunity map." Additionally, participants created images of the preferred future and drafted vision statements.

The Strategist next met with the library's Strategic Planning Committee to review the outputs from the Exploration Summit. During this design phase the Strategic Planning Committee validated the vision, core values, and strategic direction. Committee members identified objectives aligned to the strategic directions and then activities to achieve those objectives. Finally, an Importance/Difficulty Matrix was used to help the Strategic Planning Committee to prioritize activities based on how important it is to the community and how difficult it is to do (e.g., staff, budget, time, physical space). All this data was collected and organized into the strategic plan document you are reading.

Strategic Planning Committee Members

- Joe Knueven, Library Director
- Lisa Salyers, Assistant Director
- Sandy Arrasmith, Fiscal Officer
- Kat McKay, Clinton-Massie Branch Manager
- Carrie Sexton
- Esther Sorg
- Gabrielle Pollack
- Melissa Snarr
- Natalie Furnish

Strategic Planning Facilitator

Andrew Whitis, Strategist, OhioNet

Approved by the Board of Trustees, October 23rd, 2024